DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 429 360 EA 029 771


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TITLE Implementing Schoolwide Programs. Volume 2: Profiles of Successful Schoolwide Programs. An Idea Book.


INSTITUTION Policy Studies Associates, Inc., Washington, DC.
SPONS AGENCY Department of Education, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 1998-12-00
NOTE 95p.; For Volume 1, see ED 423 615.
CONTRACT EA94053001
AVAILABLE FROM U.S. Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents, Mail Stop: SSOP, Washington, DC 20401-9328.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative (142)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Case Studies; Educational Assessment; Educational Quality; Elementary Secondary Education; *Instructional Effectiveness; Program Descriptions; *Program Effectiveness; Validated Programs



ABSTRACT

This volume is part of a series of Idea Books for school-based practitioners who are implementing federal compensatory-education programs. It demonstrates how educators and their supporting communities are implementing a new vision of comprehensive school reform using the schoolwide program option available under the 1994 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which requires states and districts to set challenging standards for what students should know and be able to do. The document was completed by consulting with successful school-based educators to learn what it takes to create outstanding schoolwide programs. The volume opens with an overview of promising practices, focusing on vision, leadership, and decision making; student performance results; research-based reform strategies; the professional learning community; parent and community partnerships; and sustaining change. It includes case studies organized by elementary and secondary schools. Examples from the primary grades describe a team approach to literacy acquisition, academic success through a full-service school, ways to ensure success for all students, and making a commitment to teacher development. The two secondary-school case studies discuss ways to prepare students for real-world experiences and how to achieve a world-class standard in a culturally diverse community. (RJM)



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ED 429 360

Implementing Schoolwide Programs

VOLUME 2

# Profiles of Successful Schoolwide Programs

AN IDEA BOOK

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

THE SECRETARY

Dear Educators:

In June 1998 the Department of Education released Volume I of its Idea Book, "Implementing Schoolwide Programs." The Idea Book is intended to assist educators in implementing and improving Title I Schoolwide Programs, which have become more widely available than ever before due to changes enacted by the 1994 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Volume I explored the issues involved in establishing and running a schoolwide program.

Volume II, "Profiles of Promising Schoolwide Program Practices," profiles eight successful schoolwide programs, including six elementary schools, a middle school, and a grade 7-12 secondary school. The extended profiles provide the reader with the context for a school's particular reform efforts. They show how the schools addressed the challenge of assessing their comprehensive needs and determining how to engage diverse constituencies in successful implementation. This volume is intended to generate ideas for schoolwide program planners and operators by offering guidance, examples, and resources for further information.

I hope the information and examples provided in both volumes of the Idea Book will be helpful. Thank you for all you are doing to improve your schools and to help all children, including our lowest achieving students, to meet challenging standards.

Yours sincerely,

Dick Riley

Richard W. Riley

600 INDEPENDENCE AVE., S.W. WASHINGTON, D.C. 20202-0100

*Our mission is to ensure equal access to education and to promote educational excellence throughout the Nation.*

# Acknowledgments

*Implementing Schoolwide Programs, Volumes I and II*, is part of a series of Idea Books for school-based practitioners who are implementing federal compensatory education programs. Disseminated under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Education, the Idea Book series is designed to help schools create opportunities for learning that enable all students to achieve challenging academic standards.

This volume, *Profiles of Promising Schoolwide Program Practices*, demonstrates how educators and their supporting communities are implementing a new vision of comprehensive school reform using the schoolwide program option available under the 1994 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education. Its companion, *Volume I: An Idea Book on Planning*, describes what leads up to schoolwide implementation, using the legislative underpinnings of schoolwide programs and suggesting effective strategies that schools and communities have used to comprehensively improve learning for children in the nation's most impoverished schools.

In completing this volume, the study team consulted with successful school-based educators to learn what it takes to create outstanding schoolwide programs. We are grateful to the many named and unnamed people who lent vital assistance to this effort. Although space does not permit mentioning all the individual contributors, the school names and contact information for those included in this volume are listed on the inside of the back cover. We encourage interested readers to contact the schools directly for additional information.

The profiles in this volume were written by a talented team of Policy Studies Associates researchers who worked diligently in a compressed time frame to identify compelling examples of schoolwide programming and to tell their stories. Stacy Allen, Janie Funkhouser, David Kauffman, Kate Kelliher, and Katie Rusnak were the primary researchers and writers; Üllik Rouk, Ben Lagueruela, and Kim Thomas prepared this volume for publication. At the U.S. Department of Education, Wendy Jo New and Joanne Bogart provided invaluable support and advice throughout all stages of this project.

Finally, we thank Anastasia Miller, of Colorado Design Associates in Washington, DC, for her excellent work on the design and layout of the publication.

Questions about schoolwide programs may be directed to the U.S. Department of Education, Compensatory Education Programs, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20202, (202) 260-0826.

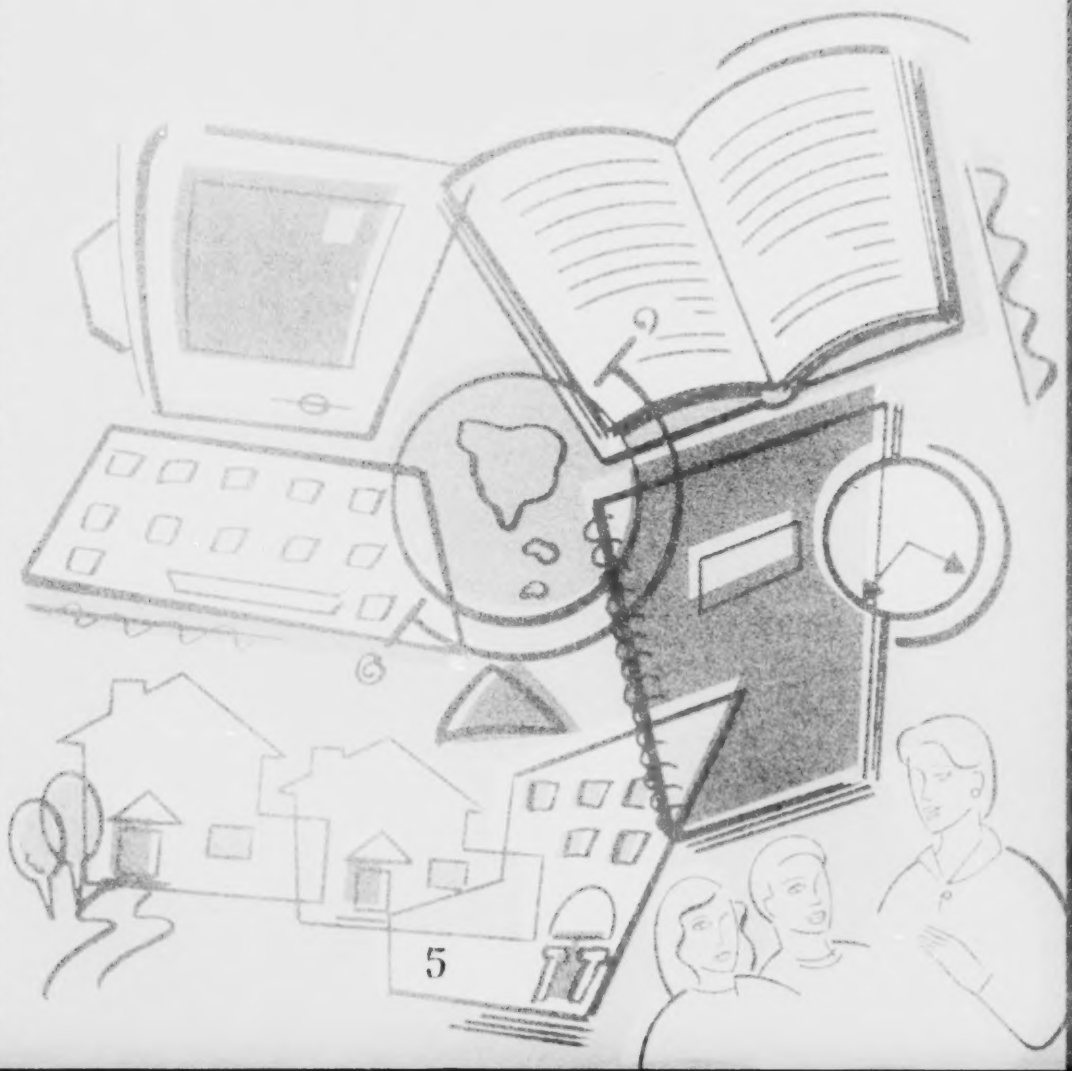
Ellen Pechman, Study Director
Policy Studies Associates
Washington, DC
December 1998

Implementing Schoolwide Programs

AN IDEA BOOK

VOLUME 2

# Profiles of Successful Schoolwide Programs



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This project was conducted by Policy Studies Associates under contract number EA94053001 with the U.S. Department of Education. The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the U.S. Department of Education, and official endorsement by the Department should not be inferred. Inclusion of a program in this volume does not imply approval for compliance purposes.

Prepared for the U.S. Department of Education
Contract EA94053001 Task 40/EA970760
December 1998

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# Introduction

***The reauthorized ESEA requires states and districts to set challenging standards for what students should know and be able to do. It gives schools, in conjunction with district- and state-level teams, the authority to make the changes they need to ensure that every student meets more demanding educational goals. Schoolwide programs implement research-based curricula with their state's standards and assessments. Accelerated instruction, high academic standards and aligned curricula, coordinated assessments, and high-quality professional development are the collective building blocks of comprehensive reform in schoolwide programs.***

2

# A New Vision of Schoolwide Programs

Schoolwide programs are the centerpiece of a twenty-first century vision of education for students who attend schools in the nation's highest poverty communities. Using a schoolwide approach, schools serving high concentrations of students in poor communities can pursue ambitious educational reforms by combining resources from Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education and funds from other federal, state, and local education programs to implement comprehensive whole school reform(s).

While schoolwide programs have been part of ESEA since 1978, reauthorization under the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) vastly increased the flexibility for using federal funds in schools serving at least 50 percent of students in poverty. Now, as long as a schoolwide program meets the legislative intent and purposes of each combined federal program, it is no longer necessary to account for and use funds separately for specific school programs or groups of children. Significantly, the federal government no longer requires budget sources to be tracked by schoolwide programs for funds that are combined, thereby providing wide latitude for full collaboration across programs, irrespective of their funding source or sponsor.

***Through whole school reforms, teachers in schoolwide programs adopt research-based instructional practices that offer all children high-quality learning opportunities.***

In response to the opportunities provided by ESEA after 1994, states and districts have revised their curricula to provide students with the quality of education that will enable them to meet challenging, grade-level academic standards. In response, changes are occurring within schools as well. Teachers are taking the lead to renew and enhance their professional skills according to plans they define and in programs they coordinate. Using instructional practices based on current research, they are offering higher-quality teaching and learning. Upgraded and innovative technological resources are bringing the world outside of school into classrooms, providing students with tools for testing and demonstrating their thinking in new ways. Parents and community members are becoming teaching partners, assisting in classrooms, tutoring in before- and after-school programs, and supporting students who are making the transition from school to work.

Schools in high-poverty communities have responded to state initiatives and to ESEA by creating new blueprints for comprehensive improvement. Plans—designed over a year-long period by schoolwide teams—are the basis for restructuring teaching and learning so that every student benefits from using the varied resources in their schools. Over a several-year period, teaching becomes more collaborative and active; narrowly conceived tests for measuring academic progress are replaced by a combination of challenging traditional and open-ended assessments; and students demonstrate what they know and can do in a variety of new ways: through essays, stories, and poetry in student-written books; in individually- and group-conducted research activities; and with hand-built and computer-based mathematical and scientific experiments.

***Schools in high-poverty communities have responded to state initiatives and to ESEA by creating new blueprints for comprehensive improvement.***

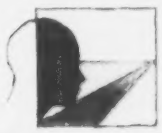


## How To Use This Volume

The schools profiled in this volume offer new images of how students in high-poverty communities can be educated. These profiles are designed to stimulate thinking, not to prescribe a particular practice or approach; they can be especially useful in promoting a dialogue about the possibilities for school change. Each profiled school took a different path to its successful schoolwide program implementation, and future schoolwide programs are encouraged to find their own paths as well. School teams are encouraged to read what is here, discuss the lessons shared, and select those that are most likely to be successful in their contexts. Contact these schools and talk with their school leaders and site-based management teams. Use the latitude available in ESEA to define the mix of programs and strategies that is right for the students your school serves. The planning strategies suggested in *Volume I*, together with the examples profiled here, offer a new vision of comprehensive school reform that fully embraces the wide-ranging human and fiscal resources available to support learning in high-poverty schools.

Additional information about the materials and strategies that the profiled schools used to upgrade their programs is available at the conclusion of *Volume I*, in the Tools and Resources sections. In addition, the faculties and leaders in the profiled schools welcome the opportunity to talk with others interested in their approach. Contact information for reaching the schools described in this volume is located on the back cover; additional school and district contact names are listed in *Volume I*.

# Promising Practices in Schoolwide Programs: A Summary



## VISION, LEADERSHIP, AND DECISION MAKING

For schoolwide programs, the central mission is to ensure that students will achieve high levels of academic proficiency. This is a challenge that educators in schoolwide programs do not meet alone. They turn for support to a diverse community of colleagues, parents, and civic leaders—all collaborating to put students' interests first.

A schoolwide team collaborated to create the multicultural mural that greets everyone who enters Barnes Elementary School. It boldly commits to "educate all of our students with a challenging world-class curriculum in a safe, culturally diverse setting." Similarly, because students learn in different ways, the Worcester Arts schoolwide plan integrates its core curriculum and the arts to respond to each student's learning style: "Our mission is to provide a balanced education for the whole child, intellectually, aesthetically, and linguistically." At Gompers Secondary School Center for Science, Mathematics, and Computer Technology, a school serving seventh- through twelfth-graders from 19 cultural groups, "strength through diversity" is the organizing theme. Its rigorous academic program affirms "the dignity and worth of each student" with the expectation that all students will attain challenging state and local standards and be prepared to continue their education beyond high school.

Although schoolwide programs rely on the talents of many leaders, principals play a key role. They set the tone, facilitate the flow of information, monitor student progress, and promote a vision in which all students achieve high proficiency levels on a standards-based curriculum. Under principals' skillful direction, site councils, governance teams, advisory committees, and task groups oversee school planning and budgeting, monitor day-to-day activities, and coordinate operations. With col-

***In schoolwide programs, high-quality professionals together with parents and community leaders collaborate to develop a learning environment in which students are first.***

*Schoolwide programs reflect the "shift of mind" about how modern organizations work productively. Under the principal's knowledgeable direction, participatory management responds to the school's varied constituencies.*

leagues, parents, and community members working collaboratively, principals design and lead the implementation of a student-centered educational program.

At P.S. 172, teachers' active participation in school operations contributes to their ownership of schoolwide reform. Assistant principal Tina Volpe reports that, "the pyramid has been reversed and the principal is no longer at the top telling teachers what to do, but at the bottom supporting them." At Barnes Elementary, open-agenda bimonthly staff meetings, which are facilitated by a rotating staff member, ensure broad-based staff participation and consensus building. Fienberg Fisher's Educational Excellence Council (EEC) invites representatives from the local police department, housing authority, health care clinic, mayor's office, and two area universities to join parents and staff in schoolwide planning.

Because schoolwide programs serve increasingly diverse populations, school leaders try to preserve a cultural and ethnic balance on decision-making bodies. At Lincoln WorldLab Magnet Elementary School, a spot on the School Advisory Committee is reserved specifically for a member of the school's Haitian community. At Worcester Arts, a fluid faculty and staff steering committee, working with the School Governance Council, keeps a check on "the pulse of the community" by meeting frequently with parents and community partners—at informal gatherings, community events, open-forums on special topics, and parent-teacher conferences—to determine whether the school is meeting community expectations.

## STUDENT PERFORMANCE RESULTS

*Schoolwide programs are publicly accountable. They regularly report results to parents and to the community using teacher-made tests, standardized assessments, and samples of students' work.*

Schoolwide programs should reflect high expectations for all students. Schools serving communities with high poverty report significant progress when they replace limited expectations with ambitious benchmarks. The positive results appear in student motivation, classroom achievement, and standardized achievement test scores.

With careful planning, a comprehensive schoolwide instructional strategy can yield positive results in only a short time. Results from the eight schoolwide programs described in this report include:

- In 1997, more than 85 percent of the Barnes third- and fifth-graders achieved the ambitious proficiency goals its site council set for students on Oregon's demanding statewide assessment.

- Fienberg Fisher uses continuous-progress testing to periodically update reading and mathematics learning profiles for each student. As students move from level to level throughout the year, they take standardized, skills-based tests that identify the areas in which they are weakest. Student progress has been confirmed by continuous gains in mathematics and reading on nationally standardized achievement tests.

- Many students at Gompers Secondary Center for Science, Mathematics, and Computer Technology Magnet begin the seventh-grade ranking well below nationally standardized norms. By their senior year, however, more than half of the students score at or above the 50th percentile in reading, language arts, and mathematics. Significantly, 95 percent of Gompers' graduating seniors pursued postsecondary education in 1996 and 1997, and more than 50 percent enrolled in four-year colleges or universities or two-year education programs.

- Students' scores at King Middle School, both on the school's rubric-based evaluation of culminating project work and on the statewide open-ended assessment, have climbed steadily since King became a schoolwide program in 1995.

- Lincoln has been tracking the percentage of its students scoring above the 50th percentile on nationally standardized tests and, in three years, has almost doubled the number of achievers at that level in both language arts and reading.

- Montview students exceed national grade-level norms in the second and fourth grades, the two grades tested on the state assessment. Disaggregated results on both the nationally normed tests and integrated writing and language arts assessments suggest that Hispanic and African American students are making academic gains on par with their Asian and white peers.

- The P.S. 172 staff create portfolios that reflect student performance on teacher-made tests, writing samples, and standardized achievement scores. On standardized tests in grades three through six, students consistently exceed districtwide and city averages, and teachers' assessments of extended written work in student portfolios mark steady progress.

**Evaluation tool kits include myriad informal and formal assessments, such as:**

- Student self-evaluations
- Teachers' observations of students
- Curriculum-embedded tests
- Essays and open-response tests
- Demonstrations and performances
- Portfolios of drafts and final products
- Multiweek projects and academic "expeditions"
- Standards-based state assessments
- Traditional norm-referenced tests
- Criterion-based standardized tests

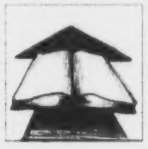
- Worcester Arts Magnet students achieved the state's sixth-highest relative gain on the 1996 Massachusetts assessment, and since that time, students have continued to maintain that level of success. In addition, students' quarterly and interim report cards record progress in creative writing, dance, drama, and a teacher-designed behavioral and academic progress checklist.

Schools' grade-level and schoolwide teams scrutinize individual student and program progress reports using disaggregated information whenever it is available. Portfolios of student work, projects, and regular writing assignments and performance tasks are often assessed against rigorous, teacher-designed rubrics. These multiple indicators reach beyond the surface evidence to point out where additional curriculum adjustments are most needed.

Schoolwide programs are publicly accountable. Through parent-teacher conferences, a school profile or report card, and progress reports, school officials inform parents about individual student progress and the school accountability status. For example, Gompers issues an annual School Accountability Report Card and also informs parents about ways to monitor their children's progress. Worcester provides parents with district-developed assessment information in the *Comprehensive Policies and Programs Handbook*, and then asks parents to verify in writing that they have received it. Through periodic meetings on assessment, Worcester's curriculum specialist and teachers help parents understand the implications of teacher-designed and state assessments for their children. Clear presentation and, when appropriate, translation into languages other than English make this valuable information accessible to all parents.

**Some schoolwide programs have adopted these and other research-based models based on student needs and in conjunction with other strategies:**

- Accelerated Schools
- Comer School Development Program
- Dimensions of Learning
- Early Literacy Inservice Course (ELIC)
- Literacy and Learning Inservice Four-Eight (LLIFE)
- Expeditionary Learning-Outward Bound (ELOB)
- Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)
- High Scope Preschool Program Literacy Learning Mode
- Open Court/Making Connections Reading
- SRA Mastery Reading
- Success for All, MathWings, and WorldLab
- Reading Recovery
- Voyage of the Mimi Science and Social Studies Program
- World of Difference



## RESEARCH-BASED REFORM STRATEGIES

Schoolwide programs adopt a combination of research-based reform strategies using models designed by nationally recognized experts and organizations. Priorities may vary, but most schools employ multiple approaches simultaneously to target different grade levels or special populations. Program concentrations may also differ, some centering on students' literacy acquisition, and adding the arts or mathematics, or integrating science and

social studies; others reorganizing the entire academic program; and still others restructuring school governance and community outreach.

Literacy, a priority for most schoolwide programs, is taught using more than a dozen research-based, "balanced" literacy models. Balanced literacy teaches language and literature in context and, simultaneously, strengthens students' ability to analyze phonetic, semantic, syntactic, and visual cues as they learn to read. Schools tailor literacy instruction to grade-level expectations and students' prior experiences and achievements by involving teachers in extensive retraining. The Barnes schoolwide literacy program, emphasizing four strands—reading, writing, spelling, and oral language—taught teachers in on-site courses to use existing resources differently by strengthening the cognitive underpinnings of students' literacy development. Montview teachers also adopted a combination of professional development models following their extensive research into what makes a successful reading program.

**It's not an 'anything goes' sort of culture here. We abandoned approaches that didn't work and designed our program around students'—not teachers'—needs.**

**Debbie Backus, Principal**
**Montview Elementary School**
**Aurora, CO**





Reading and language arts is a focus in secondary schools as well. King tracks students' literacy development using "working" portfolios of drafts, students' self-evaluations of works-in-progress, and "finished" portfolios of their final products. Students at King work in teams and study groups and can receive individualized assistance in the school's Student Learning Center. At Gompers, double language arts blocks and daily 20-minute "sustained silent reading" periods combine literature, reading for pleasure, and basic skill building. Gompers' teachers also monitor seventh-graders' developing skills in note-taking and record-keeping to ensure they acquire the study habits they need to be successful in the demanding upper-grade academic programs.

In extended language arts blocks, students connect reading with literature and writing skill development. Reading specialists, resource teachers, ESL staff, and special education staff join regular classroom teachers during the longer classes, making individualized teaching feasible. Several schools have adopted Reading Recovery in combination with other concentrated programs to help the most at-risk students. For example, Worcester targets both Reading Recovery and Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) to the most underachieving students. Through Success For All (SFA), Lincoln teaches reading and language arts in 120-minute blocks, using the SFA curriculum that teaches comprehension, listening, speaking, and vocabulary skills as students read multicultural stories that reflect their backgrounds and experience. Lincoln also provides 20 minutes of individual tutoring each day for students who score in the lowest quartile of the CTBS test.

Many schoolwides serve large populations of students with limited-English proficiency (LEP), and they provide assistance to ensure LEP students acquire language skills in English. Program approaches vary depending on the schools' philosophy of language instruction. Some schools favor immersion into English-only classrooms, using pull-out assistance only when necessary; others prefer intensive and transitional ESL services or dual-language immersion. Barnes, for example, offers nine Spanish-English bilingual classrooms for native speakers of both languages, and ESL services in mainstream classes for LEP students, most of whom are of Asian descent. To ensure that LEP students keep up in all subjects, P.S. 172 introduces them to social studies and language arts through a multicultural, literature-based program called "Making Connections."

***Schoolwide program planners recognize that the arts are essential to the core curriculum.***

A New York Partnership for the Arts and Annenberg Foundation grant brings artists into P.S. 172 to demonstrate how teachers can incorporate arts into the core curriculum. As early as preschool, Worcester students prepare performances, exhibitions, and demonstrations of what they have learned in class. Each week, Worcester students also study drama, dance, visual arts, music, and creative writing during their regular "arts block" and apply their developing aesthetic sensibilities to the core academic program. The arts are an essential part of students' schedules at King Middle School as well. Computer and music classes are offered in grade six; art and writing workshops are available in grade seven; and eighth-graders study design and technology.

**Schoolwide programs offer all students the benefit of special services such as:**

- Reading and mathematics specialists
- Bilingual and ESL educators
- Psychologists
- Counselors
- Special educators
- Speech, language, and occupational therapists
- Social workers
- Community liaisons
- Technology specialists

Cutting-edge technology helps organize and manage schoolwide program schedules, strengthens academic content, and connects home and school. Principals and management teams use computers to communicate with one another, maintain progress reports, and schedule their academic programs. Word processing and graphics software programs can produce handbooks, announcements, newsletters, invitations, plans, and certificates of appreciation to involve parents fully in students' academic program.

At Montview, computers in each classroom and in the media center give students the opportunity to research, write, edit, and "publish" the results of their learning. Access both to the Internet and to e-mail enables Gompers' students to conduct online experiments with astronauts from the Student

Mission Control Center at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. High school students at Gompers may also take advanced courses in computer science, science, and mathematics using sophisticated science equipment, telescopes, and state-of-the art computer networks.

Many schoolwide programs incorporate preschool programs to ease the transition of children into elementary school. At Lincoln, the preschool program and kindergarten classrooms use some of the Success for All instructional strategies that traditionally begin in the first grade. Barnes sponsors outreach activities to make the transition between preschool and kindergarten easier for children and their families. The Barnes staff invite children under five and their parents to story times in the school's library to sing songs, read stories, and do "finger plays" in both English and Spanish. They also visit neighboring apartment complexes and homes of day-care providers to model how reading aloud can stimulate language development and encourage children's early involvement with books. Most of the schoolwide programs in this volume also host Head Start or preschool classes in their schools.

**By becoming a schoolwide program, we do not target a specific group of children; instead we assist the struggling students by strengthening the entire school.**

Jack Spatola, Principal
P.S. 172
Brooklyn, NY





***Schoolwide programs add instructional support:***

- All-day preschools prepare young children to make a smooth transition to kindergarten. At Lincoln, preschool and kindergarten teachers participate in the Success for All training with the rest of the staff to learn to incorporate SFA strategies in the early childhood years. Worcester's preschoolers participate fully in the same integrated arts program designed for all students.

- As part of the Comer School Development Program, Fienberg Fisher orients its curriculum around six developmental pathways—cognitive, social, psychological, moral, speech and language, and physical.

- The Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound (ELOB) program at King strengthens students' self-confidence by assigning them to the same teacher for at least two years. Students also participate in rigorous, interdisciplinary learning expeditions, which are conducted by collaborating student teams.

- Gompers extends the school year for entering seventh-graders through a summer camp program consisting of mini-courses on homework expectations, note taking, and strategies for keeping up with daily assignments.

***Extended learning opportunities before and after school offer students reinforcement, tutoring, and enrichment.***

Many schoolwide programs arrange for assistance teams to provide counseling and psychological support to students. Cross-disciplinary teams, including teachers, counselors, social workers and psychologists, monitor students' academic and behavioral development and recommend appropriate interventions. The Barnes Teacher Assistance Team includes a child development specialist, a social worker, the principal, and representatives from the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program. The team meets with teachers, listens to their concerns, and suggests appropriate program accommodations. At Fienberg Fisher, a similar multidisciplinary team devises developmentally appropriate plans for each student who is at risk of failing to meet the school's standards. Montview provides a temporary, alternative setting where students with behavioral or emotional problems can receive one-on-one instruction and get personalized attention to help them get back on track. Family Support Teams at several schools give students access to neighborhood mental health services.

Most schoolwide programs also provide extended learning opportunities to enhance students' interpersonal and extracurricular growth. Before- and after-school tutoring, enrichment, and summer school programs stave off problems and offer safety nets to struggling students. King keeps four well-equipped project rooms open before, during, and after school so that students, parents, teachers, and community members can meet there to collaborate on projects. Lincoln offers its high-achieving students a chance to participate in the Structures of Intellect curriculum, which prepares them for the district's gifted and talented program. At Barnes, community college and high school students tutor younger students in an after-school program in which ESL staff also offer supplementary language instruction. The P.S. 172 after-school program is designed to strengthen students' reading development through creative dramatics, music, and puppetry.

## THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY

Teaching strategists — coaches, facilitators, and teacher leaders — provide on-the-job mentoring and individualized collegial assistance, especially to new teachers. In some cases, teacher leaders also monitor their colleagues' personal action plans and conduct structured classroom observations.

In schoolwide programs, adult learning is as important as student learning. Professional development, most of which is organized around the schools' research-based reform models, occurs during the school day or through summer institutes. Long-term staff development, rather than "one-shot" programs, is the standing policy. At Worcester Arts Magnet, teachers use grants, tuition waivers, and state- or district-funded release time to participate in numerous courses and workshops, which they, in turn, share with their colleagues. Professional development at other schools includes the following activities:

***In schoolwide programs, adult learning is as important as student learning. Long-term staff development, rather than "one-shot" programs, is the standing policy.***

- Fienberg Fisher hosts four coaches who mentor teachers in language arts, technology, bilingual education, and science; previously, the staff had also spent a year learning to implement the Comer School Development Program through mini-retreats, workshops, and seminars.

- At P.S. 172, visiting master teachers conduct demonstration math and science classes, facilitate teacher workshops, and consult with teachers regarding strategies for incorporating the arts into instruction.

- Different New American Schools design teams trained the King staff in the Expeditionary Learning Model and supported Lincoln teachers in adopting the Success For All models. A team of Comer School Development specialists continues to offer support to the Fienberg Fisher faculty.

- Three Worcester Arts Magnet faculty members took one-year sabbaticals to attend Harvard University and study specialized areas of interest; once they rejoined the faculty, they shared their research with colleagues and integrated much of what they learned into Worcester's renewal plans.

- Mentoring programs at Lincoln and at Gompers enable new teachers to observe their colleagues, attend professional-growth classes, participate in dialogues with seasoned colleagues, and receive assistance from mentor observers.

- Preschool and kindergarten teachers from Worcester Arts Magnet participated in an accreditation program sponsored by the National Association for the Education of Young Children and, in doing so, obtained national accreditation for their own early childhood program.

When a faculty adopts research-based models, its members participate in the extended course work and mentoring offered by the programs' developers. Working within a school, regional specialists or electronically networked program advisors ease the process of adapting models to schools. Some groups promote forums where teachers openly discuss concerns and doubts that arise as the new programs are adopted. Barnes implemented several coordinated literacy courses to retrain teachers and classroom assistants in strategies for teaching developmental reading. At Worcester Arts Magnet, Reading Recovery teachers participate in intensive course work on college campuses, and they continue this specialized training for a second year through on-site supervision and advanced seminars. To implement the Montview Literacy Learning Model, six teacher leaders received specialized training so that they could assist their colleagues during weekly meetings and in-class collaboration. At Lincoln, two in-school facilitators serve as permanent members of the faculty who help teachers implement Success for All, MathWings, and WorldLab by monitoring student progress and by planning instructional accommodations for students. At periodic regional and national meetings, these facilitators also stay in touch with colleagues around the country who are implementing the Success For All school improvement designs nationally.

## PARENT AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Parent and community partnerships sustain schoolwide programs and services by encouraging widespread parent and community participation. Schoolwide programs keep parents well informed about school activities and student progress, and they reach out in various other ways. King issues newsletters and videos of students pursuing expeditionary work; Lincoln provides families with "student agendas" and daily calendars for keeping track of student assignments and events. Montview's full-time parent coordinator and community liaison helps families access resources, obtain employment information, and locate housing. Also at Montview, parents are hired for school positions whenever possible.

**One of the keys to our success is the fact that we've involved parents.... They are our greatest advocates.**

Margaret Venditti, Principal
Worcester Arts Magnet Elementary School
Worcester, MA

Because all these schoolwide programs emphasize the need to include parents on decisionmaking bodies, parents serve on site councils, planning, and accreditation committees. Other examples of parent involvement include the following:

- "Story ladies" at Barnes Elementary go into homes to read and share books with parents and their preschool children. Barnes also sponsors "Reading is a Shared Affair" to promote reading at home. Families come to evening meetings where they receive free books and learn how reading with young children can support literacy development.

- Parents at three schools—Fienberg Fisher, Gompers, and Montview—can visit permanent parent centers, where they register for parenting and GED classes and check out educational materials throughout the day.

- At the P.S. 172 biannual Education Fair, parents receive advice on the best strategies for them to promote their children's academic progress at home.

- Lincoln offers numerous opportunities for parents to learn along with their children, including the Parent Power and Parent Power Kids programs, adult education/GED preparation, and MegaSkills classes.

- Gompers, Lincoln, and Worcester Arts Magnet outline expectations for parents—both in booklets sent to parents and through parent

compacts—to encourage parents to understand and meet their obligations in promoting their children's education.

Schoolwide programs promote cultural inclusiveness by making special accommodations for parents of varied nationalities, cultures, and ethnic groups. To effectively serve a multilanguage student population, each school translates materials into the appropriate languages and, if necessary, provides translators to conduct individual consultations with parents. Worcester provides an interpreter for parent meetings, uses a bilingual family liaison to encourage parent involvement, and also employs a bilingual counselor and psychologist. King staff reach out to migrant parents through home visits and an annual multicultural party.

Parents are also urged to participate in schoolwide professional development programs. Involving the entire school community—professionals as well as parents and community members—in learning together promotes understanding about why and how schools are changing and strengthens the unity of communities' visions for the future. Gompers sets aside a portion of its budget to encourage parents to attend conferences, staff development activities, and faculty meetings. The Worcester Arts Magnet's accreditation team involved subcommittees of parents, teachers, administrators, and community members in a school accreditation process that received high praise for its successful self-study and resulting long-range plan.

## SUSTAINING CHANGE

Maintaining the collaborative spirit and communitywide commitment to improvement that initially inspired schools is one of the greatest challenges to sustaining schoolwide programs. Each schoolwide program has high expectations for performance and commitment, and the task can sometimes be daunting. Nevertheless, sharing leadership and responsibility, establishing trust, and taking risks together are keys to sustaining reform. "What happens," P.S. 172 principal Jack Spatola reports, "is that the more successful you are, the more work you have because people are pulling on you from many different directions." Most schoolwide practitioners think of their programs as works in progress: "We're always working at it, [but] we're never quite there," Montview's Debbie Backus acknowledges.

**Success breeds success. When teachers and the outside community see that our students can produce high-quality work, they want to stay committed.**

Michael McCarthy, Principal
King Middle School
Portland, ME

Schools take a major step toward sustaining change when they cast a wide net during the needs assessment and planning phases of schoolwide implementation. If a representative schoolwide planning team—including teachers, parents, and community leaders—really "owns" the process, they invest in its success. Teacher-led initiatives, full participant involvement in making final decisions, and collegial mentoring and support unite communities in a common mission that grounds the schoolwide program. "So much evolves from our teachers," says Gompers' Marie Thornton, pointing out that the faculty-community partnership inspires a tireless investment to ensure that students excel academically.

***Teachers, parents, and community leaders really own the process and they invest in its success.***

Keeping up with the research on teaching and learning is another challenge to sustaining change. Worcester's Margaret Venditti points out how important it is "to make sure you don't just hop on the bandwagon because something is in vogue, but because you know that it works...and that it is based on a solid foundation of research...." Schoolwide programs draw support from the expertise of their district administrators and of collaborating reform organizations, networks, and state and federal regional assistance centers.

There is never enough time, although being able to combine programs and services increases the focus on learning. Expectations are high and there is considerable work to be done, so schoolwide programs "create time" with flexible schedules, extended school days, and by turning to parents and community members for help.

Finally, "you have to model it—walk the talk," says Fienberg Fisher's Grace Nebb, "we are constantly modeling, training, preaching, transforming, and developing." In the end, schoolwide programs work, as the Worcester Arts Magnet self-study accreditation team reported, because "the whole is much larger than the sum of the parts."

# Elementary Schools

**Barnes Elementary School**
A Team Approach to Literacy Acquisition

**Fienberg Fisher Elementary School**
Academic Success Through a "Full Service" School

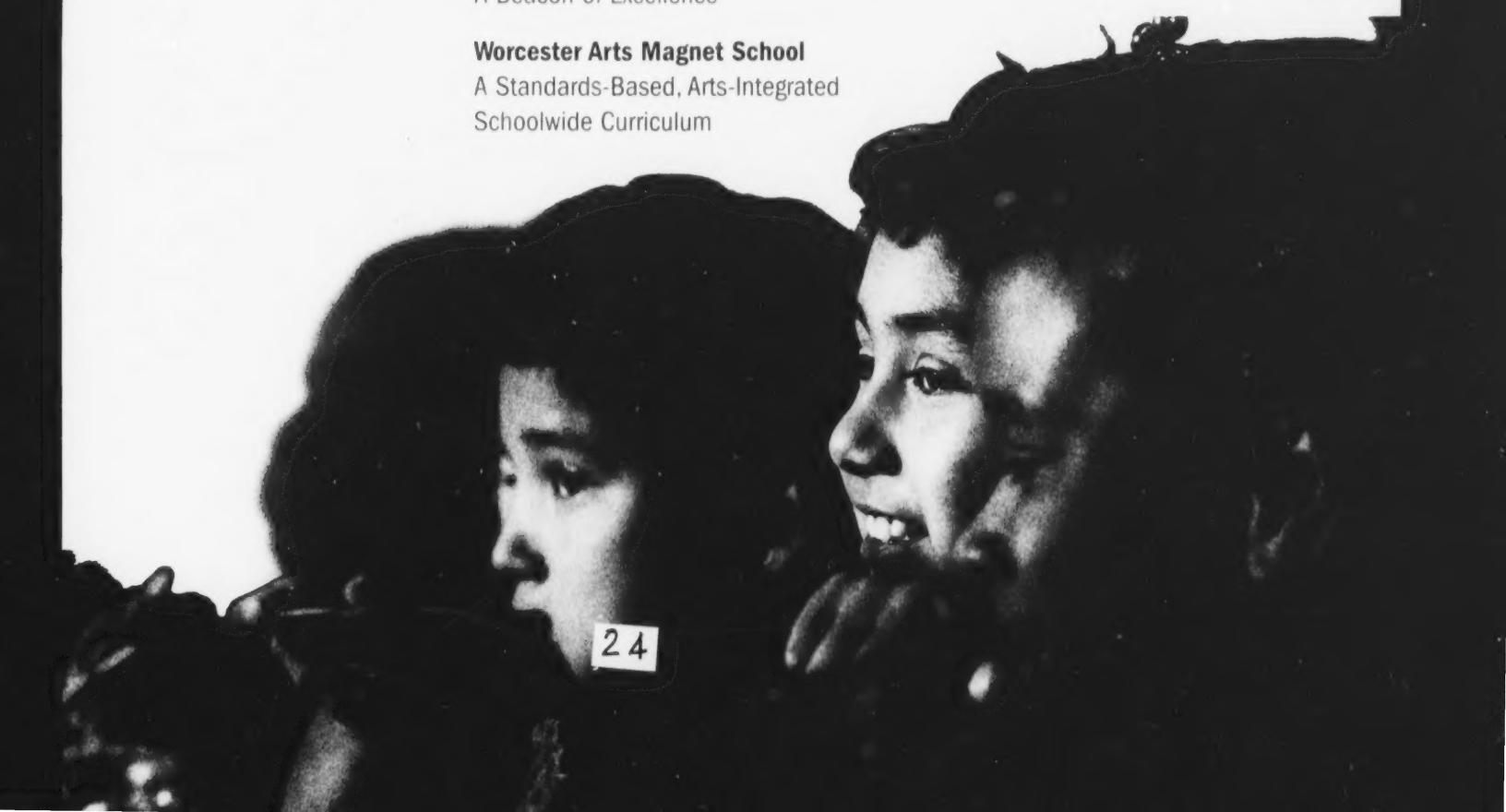
**Lincoln WorldLab Magnet Elementary School**
Ensuring Success for All Students

**Montview Elementary School**
Commitment to Teacher Development

**P. S. 172**
A Beacon of Excellence

**Worcester Arts Magnet School**
A Standards-Based, Arts-Integrated Schoolwide Curriculum





# Principles of Effective Schoolwide Programs

Schoolwide programs use multiple sources of federal, state, and local funding to plan and implement comprehensive reforms that benefit all students. Combining funds provides the resources schools need to increase children's learning without having to separately identify individual children to receive specialized services or to track federal dollars. Research indicates that effective, long-running schoolwide programs:

- Plan for comprehensive, long-term improvement with data-based strategies
- Serve all students and their families with well-trained, highly-skilled teachers and specialists
- Offer teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, and parents continuing learning opportunities
- Adapt research to solve a variety of emerging problems
- Use inclusive approaches to strengthen the school's organizational infrastructure
- Support comprehensive reform with adequate resources
- Engage in continuous self-assessment and renewal
- Commit to invest time and to risk change

# A Team Approach to Literacy Acquisition

## Barnes Elementary School

### Beaverton School District #48 · Beaverton, Oregon

### OVERVIEW

Barnes Elementary School became a schoolwide program in the fall of 1995, the same year it began implementing the tenets of the Accelerated Schools Project. With the assistance of researchers at Stanford University, Barnes aligned its curriculum with state benchmarks and developed a schoolwide focus on literacy acquisition to accelerate student learning. The comprehensive schoolwide program fosters collaboration among staff who formerly taught in separate Title I, Migrant, Bilingual/ESL, and special education programs. Working together as a team, the staff meets regularly to ensure that all students, a quarter of whom are enrolled in the school's bilingual programs, receive the education services they need to achieve high standards.

Respect for student diversity, reflected in a multicultural mural that adorns the school building, is embedded in the school's vision statement—"Barnes' school community empowers and honors all students on their unique journeys toward lifelong success and responsibility." The school promotes multicultural learning by making use of parents' language skills and diverse cultural experiences. By translating all relevant materials into Spanish, Barnes welcomes family participation in all activities and keeps families informed of student progress.



Barnes used a combination of federal resources, including Title I, Part A, Eisenhower Professional Development, Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities, Innovative Education Strategies, and the Bilingual Education Act to support the Early Literacy Inservice Course (ELIC) and First Steps, a literacy program that faculty are using schoolwide. In heterogeneous classrooms, student learning is enhanced by cooperative learning, thematic units, and technology. To institute thematic units across classrooms, the school's media and technology specialists coordinate available print and computer resources. The media specialist hosts reading contests and visits by guest authors; the technology specialist identifies and obtains bilingual software to meet students' instructional needs.

***At Barnes, 52% of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch and 25% of the students are of Hispanic origin.***

**Grade Levels**
K–5

**Number of Students (1997–98)**
590

**Schoolwide Since**
1995–96

**Racial/Ethnic Composition**
66% White
25% Hispanic
8% Asian
1% African American

## Vision, Leadership, and Decision Making

In 1994-95, several "cadres," or teams, of staff, parents, and community members guided the school's improvement process, emphasizing high expectations for all students, developmentally appropriate instruction, and positive interaction between home, school, and community. This shared leadership strategy has kept the staff focused on maintaining school improvement. Two of the original planning cadres continue in advisory roles: the bilingual and the safety cadres. The bilingual cadre — two ESL teachers, 10 bilingual teachers, an ESL instructional aide, and the principal — meet twice monthly to coordinate the bilingual program; the safety cadre, including two school custodians, three instructional aides, and the principal, addresses building safety and school climate concerns.

***Barnes' primary decision-making vehicle is the Site Council, an elected body of three parents, three teachers, one classified staff member, and the principal.***

Barnes' primary decision-making vehicle is the Site Council, an elected body of three parents, three teachers, one classified staff member, and the principal. The Site Council convenes monthly to review students' progress toward state standards, monitor the implementation of the schoolwide improvement plan, and identify areas for staff development; the faculty then reviews and approves its recommendations. Bimonthly staff meetings, led by faculty on a rotating basis, follow open agendas and reach decisions by consensus. Under Barnes' shared decision-making model, "Everybody has a stake, and everybody has a say," reports principal Brenda Lewis.

Brenda Lewis became the principal at Barnes in fall 1995, just as the schoolwide program was initiated. Her expertise in bilingual education and her collaborative working style made her an invaluable leader during the first challenging year of schoolwide program implementation. Lewis feels her chief responsibility was to keep information flowing among staff and parents so they could make data-based instructional decisions together. To help accomplish this, Lewis issues a weekly newsletter to staff and a monthly newsletter to parents, keeping everyone apprised of forthcoming activities, meetings, events, and other relevant information.

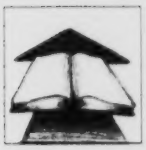
## Student Performance Results

Subject-area committees at Barnes aligned the school's curriculum with the Oregon Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM) and Certificate of Advanced Mastery (CAM) and created grade-level expectations as well as benchmark indicators for grades three and five. In spring 1996, the Site Council set an ambitious grade-level progress target: 85 percent of third- and fifth-graders would achieve proficiency on the state's reading and mathematics assessments. By spring 1997, students in the target grades had surpassed that goal.

***Test scores at Barnes have risen steadily since 1993, surpassing performance goals in reading and mathematics by spring 1997.***

Barnes' average test scores on the Oregon Statewide Assessment have risen consistently over the past five years. From 1993 to 1997, using statewide percentiles, third-graders' scores on Oregon's reading as essment rose from the 40th to the 70th percentile and on the mathematics assessment from the 47nd to 63th percentile. Fifth-graders' scores rose from the 41st to the 59th percentile in reading, and from 40th to 70th percentile in mathematics. Disaggregated data for the 1997 assessments demonstrate that Hispanic and ESL students perform slightly below the school's average but still meet state standards for proficiency.

In addition to using the state assessment, Barnes measures students' reading progress through ongoing performance assessments aligned with the First Steps literacy program, including reading miscue inventories, running records, writing samples, and student portfolios. It also assesses fourth-grade students on the Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT-7). As Oregon makes available a bilingual English and Spanish state assessment, students can take the test in the language in which they are most proficient. Scores from these tests are issued to parents in both English and Spanish.



## Research-based Reform Strategies

To fulfill its commitment to all students achieving the same high academic standards, the Barnes planning cadres identified a two-part priority: literacy and bilingual education. They felt that coordinating these two emphases would strengthen literacy development among both English-speaking and bilingual students, giving both groups a solid language foundation in their native language and in a second language as the basis for academic growth in all other content areas.

Language arts instruction is based on two literacy inservice models developed in Australia: Early Literacy Inservice Course (ELIC) and First Steps. ELIC is an intensive, 12-week course in which teachers in kindergarten through third grade study students' emergent reading and writing; First Steps builds on ELIC in the intermediate grades. ELIC and First Steps develop teachers' capacity to identify and address each child's reading development needs.

Under these literacy development programs, teachers monitor each child's development in four literacy strands — reading, writing, spelling, and oral language — and design instruction according to students' status on a literacy developmental continuum. Professional resource guides and diagnostic materials enable teachers to use children's literature and other non-basal instructional materials to teach reading. Ten specialist teachers funded by Title I, Bilingual/ESL, Migrant, and Special Education programs provide a daily 30-minute "boost of service" during language arts periods within regular classrooms. If necessary, students receive additional tutorial instruction in the school's "learning center," a large room with four teaching stations staffed by teaching specialists and instructional aides. This coordination allows Barnes to significantly reduce the student-teacher ratio during language arts. On-site reading specialist Jeannie Moberly reports that these two programs have transformed literacy instruction at Barnes because the full staff adheres to the same instructional philosophy and uses the same strategies to promote learning across classrooms and grades.

***Teachers share a common philosophy about literacy acquisition, emphasizing language arts as a developmental continuum involving four literacy strands—reading, writing, spelling, and oral language.***

To emphasize higher levels of achievement, students work within large and small groups, and often in pairs, and they are assisted by classroom

teachers and other support staff members. Cooperative learning strategies and heterogeneous grouping patterns are flexibly interspersed with small group instruction to focus on students who may need specific skill development. Teachers across programs and grades collaborate to ensure that individual student needs are supplemented by the most appropriate program and that high standards are uniformly applied. Students are involved in goal setting and monitoring of their own academic growth.

***Cooperative learning strategies and heterogeneous grouping patterns are flexibly interspersed with small group instruction to focus on students who may need specific skill development.***

Approximately one-third of Barnes' students receive some type of English-as-a-second-language assistance, through either a dual-language/bilingual immersion program or ESL services in mainstream classes. At least one Spanish/English bilingual class is available at each grade for students who speak Spanish and for English speakers who want to learn Spanish. The bilingual program supports the native language literacy that students develop initially; as students master literacy in their primary language, they can more readily apply their knowledge to their second language. In bilingual classrooms, Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays are Spanish-instructional days; Tuesdays and Thursdays are English-instructional days. Bilingual teachers coordinate with regular classroom teachers to teach mathematics, science, social studies, art, and music. For the relatively small number of limited-English speakers with primary home languages other than Spanish, Barnes offers individualized ESL instruction through a partially mainstreamed and partially pull-out approach.



Barnes decided to emphasize a bilingual approach as its primary instructional strategy among its Spanish-speaking students because the staff saw how well bilingual teaching served its numerous Hispanic students. According to ESL teacher Eve Berry, "Once Spanish literacy was introduced, we began to see success in all areas of the curriculum. For us, that [evidence] was enough to reconcile any differing opinions about the two approaches," she said. The Barnes staff also felt that bilingual classes so significantly promoted students' pride in their cultural heritage that students more successfully developed literacy proficiency in both their native language and in English.

***Barnes implements a dual-language/bilingual immersion program for native Spanish and English speakers. Offering instruction in nine bilingual classrooms simultaneously accommodates the growing Hispanic bilingual population and advances literacy learning and respect for diversity among students.***

Barnes' media specialist and technology specialists contribute to the success of the dual schoolwide literacy and bilingual focus. The media specialist coordinates the All-School Reading Program, an annual contest that rewards students for the number of hours they spend reading. The librarian helps teachers implement thematic units, hosts guest authors and storytellers, and works with the "story squad," a storytelling troupe for fourth- and

fifth-graders. Each classroom is equipped with a Macintosh PowerBook and a desktop computer that has CD-ROM capability. The learning center has 10 laptop computers, three CD-ROM systems, and two PowerBooks. A full-time instructional technologist—a former classroom teacher—combines his curriculum and technology expertise to help teachers implement multimedia activities that support thematic instruction.

Students have access to numerous extended learning opportunities. Under the Start Making a Reader Today (SMART) program, corporate and community volunteers read to selected students for 30 minutes each week. After school, students participate in Voices, a tutoring program that brings in junior high, high school, and community college students to work with younger students, and primary-age ESL students receive additional language instruction from ESL staff. Barnes also hosts an annual summer school program for incoming fifth-graders.

Barnes is staffed by a full range of specialists who serve students directly and assist teachers. A child development specialist manages support services for students at risk and promotes drug awareness. The child development specialist also serves on the Barnes' Teacher Assistance Team (TAT), along with teaching specialists, a social worker, the principal, and a representative from the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program. The TAT advises teachers when questions arise about supporting students' academic progress or addressing health or family life concerns. Its members are also available to suggest in-class strategies, offer students direct assistance, or, if necessary, refer students to the special education team, which assesses the needs of students with disabilities, works with families, and coordinates services.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

## The Professional Learning Community

***The highly qualified and diverse staff at Barnes includes, in addition to its 23 certified classroom teachers, a media specialist, a technology instructor, teachers certified in bilingual education, a child development specialist, a speech pathologist, a school psychologist, and a social worker.***

The highly qualified and diverse staff at Barnes includes, in addition to its 23 certified classroom teachers, a media specialist, a technology instructor, teachers certified in bilingual education, a child development specialist, a speech pathologist, a school psychologist, and a social worker. Staff development at Barnes revolves around the seven in-school, half-day

workshops; demonstration lessons; and the opportunity for professional reflection and learning that ELIC and First Steps provide. As teachers hone their diagnostic skills, they learn to monitor and interpret student literacy acquisition and writing development and to design instruction based on that information. Two Barnes teachers who are also ELIC facilitators offer their colleagues peer coaching and direct training. Barnes will complete three retraining cycles that will enable the school's 37 certified and 17 classified staff to use ELIC and First Steps. Also, two teachers participate in a district-sponsored pilot Intermediate Literacy Inservice Course (ILIC), the intermediate counterpart to ELIC.

## Parent and Community Partnerships

In keeping with its commitment to strong school, home, and community connections, Barnes sponsors activities for preschoolers and families to ease the transition to kindergarten, and it also sponsors a Head Start Program on site. The school invites parents of three-, four-, and five-year-olds to participate in preschool story times in the school's library, where they learn stories, songs, and finger plays in both English and Spanish. Staff "story ladies" reach out to families in apartment complexes and the homes of day-care providers, modeling how to read aloud, stimulate language development, and encourage children's interactions with books and language.

Parents and Teachers for Barnes (PTB) is another in-school volunteer group that coordinates special projects. Parents purchase multicultural books, volunteer in classrooms, and read to students as part of the SMART program. To encourage parent attendance at meetings and activities, Barnes elicits student presentations as often as possible. Barnes also sets aside $350 annually to host evening activities. Back-to-school night, technology night, a Hispanic community dinner, and the Valentine's Day spaghetti dinner have been among the most well-attended PTB special events. A bilingual instructional aide recruits parents from the Hispanic community to attend these and other school events. The aide then ensures a good turnout by organizing rides so that parents can get to and from the school during the evenings.

***Reading is a Shared Affair offers families literacy programs to Barnes' parents in both Spanish and English. With the support of school and business partnerships, parents attend periodic meetings where child care is available; local restaurants provide dinner, and an area bookstore gives free books to parents who meet reading goals with their children.***

Barnes instituted Reading is a Shared Affair in partnership with two local businesses and the PTB. This national reading promotion program encourages parents to read with their children at home. In four evening sessions, offered in both Spanish and English, local restaurants donate dinners to participating families and the school provides child care during the evening meetings. To encourage parents' continuing participation, the school takes out to lunch those parents who read with their children for 90 hours. In appreciation for parents who maintain a monthly reading calendar, Barnes gives parents free books donated by an area book store.

## Sustaining Change

The deeply committed staff at Barnes saw the possibilities for school improvement and reached out to invite the community to participate in the process. Much has changed for students and for the faculty, and the improvements have been gratifying to all.

Still, sustaining change can overwhelm teachers. "You can't change the wheels while the car is moving," observed Jeannie Moberly. Many activities are occuring simultaneously and intensive teaching responsibilities, combined with additional non-teaching planning and coordinating responsibilities, often leaves teachers with too little time for reflection and planning. When this occurs, the solution is to encourage teachers to pay attention to and appreciate their successes before they attempt to assess and plan the next steps.

***Students' continuing growth and academic progress is the impetus for increasing parent involvement, deepening community commitment, and teachers' sustained dedication to reform.***

But, as long as students continue to grow and make academic progress," principal Lewis noted philosophically, "that in itself is a reward." It is also the impetus for the deepening community commitment and increasing parent involvement and that encourages Barnes' dedicated and talented staff to stay the course toward reform.

# Academic Success Through a "Full Service" School

## Fienberg Fisher Elementary School

**Dade County Public Schools · Miami Beach, Florida**

### OVERVIEW

Fienberg Fisher Elementary School is a "full-service" school where highly trained teachers, committed parents, and invested community partners combine academic, social, emotional, and health services to minimize the obstacles that keep students from achieving challenging academic standards. In striving for all students to become "independent, lifelong, academically successful, and healthy learners," the school adopted the Comer School Development Program in the 1991-92 school year to implement its schoolwide program. Continuing needs assessments have increased the school's focus on literacy, and, through a schoolwide reassessment, Fienberg Fisher upgraded and expanded its reading program in 1997.

Consensus is the primary decision-making strategy at Fienberg Fisher, so when principal Grace Nebb saw the opportunity to become a schoolwide in 1991, she turned to teachers, administrators, parents, and community leaders to help decide the school's new direction. "We saw the opportunity to eliminate little segments of education and to look at high academics instead of only remedial [interventions]...," explained Nebb. Combining Title I and Bilingual Education Funds Act with other state-sponsored and foundation grants enabled Fienberg Fisher to implement these reforms.



Fienberg Fisher's instructional program meets the needs of its diverse student population, which includes a large Hispanic community as well as many newly arrived immigrant families. The school provides a strong safety net of social and human services and an intensive academic program. In the mid-1990s, when the school's comprehensive needs assessment revealed years of stagnant reading scores, the staff made literacy its academic focus and adopted a phonics-based literacy program with extended literacy development through writing and literature.

***The school serves a diverse, low-income community that is largely Hispanic, but also includes new immigrant and African American families.***

**Grade Levels**
PreK–6

**Number of Students (1997–98)**
891

**Schoolwide Since**
1991–92

**Racial/Ethnic Composition**
77% Hispanic
10% African American
10% White

## Vision, Leadership, and Decision Making

***The Educational Excellence Council (EEC) is the Fienberg Fisher decision-making body, and its members include representative administrators, teachers, and paraprofessionals.***

The Comer philosophy encourages a team approach to school leadership that involves all adults who have a stake in children's education. The Educational Excellence Council (EEC) is the Fienberg Fisher decision-making body, and its members include representative administrators, teachers, and paraprofessionals; community participants include parents from partner agencies such as the police department, housing authority, a local health clinic, the mayor's office, Barry College, and the University of Miami. The EEC meets monthly to keep student and school improvement needs in clear focus. Four subcommittees each concentrate on a different school component: (1) the school improvement plan, (2) the school budget, (3) student discipline, and (4) an adult issues committee. After the EEC establishes the priorities and objectives of the school improvement plan, the subcommittee assigned to develop the plan devises ways to implement the priorities and then reports back to the EEC for its consensus. Both formal and informal dissemination strategies keep the large Fienberg Fisher community informed of decisions. To keep communications personal, EEC members ask those who attend each meeting to notify at least five people about the topics discussed or decisions reached. This personal feedback technique creates a "pyramid structure" for involving others, explained the principal, and it is a quick means of assessing community reactions to decisions.

## Student Performance Results

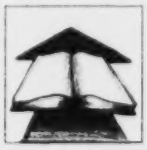
***The 1994 fourth-grade cohort gained 11 percentile points by 1997 in reading comprehension and in mathematics applications on the Stanford Achievement Tests.***

Student performance needs direct school reform at Fienberg Fisher. Standardized assessments, teacher-made tests, and SRA Mastery tests keep administrators and teachers informed about students' performance and enable them to make any necessary adjustments. Each year the EEC revises the schoolwide plan, based on the results of the state-administered Stanford Achievement Tests and the Florida Writing Assessment, to keep the priorities in line with the school's commitment to meet Florida's eight

state goals. The district offers schools a "menu" of research-based programs, paid for in part with Title I funds, from which administrators can choose those that best match the needs identified by the assessment.

When cluster analyses by grade and subject showed flat reading scores, the EEC adopted SRA Reading Mastery. One of the attractions of this program is its continuous monitoring and assessment system. At the beginning of the year, students take a pretest that enables teachers to group them; as students develop their skills, they advance to the next level so no student need wait until the whole group goes forward. After every fifth lesson, teachers reassess students' reading rate and accuracy; after 20 lessons, students take comprehension mastery tests. Individual student profiles assess students' literacy skills and identify areas in which students may need additional academic support. In mathematics, pre- and post-competency-based curriculum tests, portfolios and projects, teacher-designed tests, and student competitions measure and track student academic growth and focus attention on student areas of weakness.

Every year, Fienberg Fisher students show significant progress. From 1994 to 1997, students in the fourth grade advanced 11 percentiles on the Stanford Achievement Tests in reading comprehension and mathematics applications. Students in other grades showed similar gains. In addition, the median percentile for all grades on the Stanford Achievement Tests between 1994 and 1996 increased by 5 percent in mathematics computation, 9 percent in mathematics applications, and 18 percent in science. Between 1995 and 1997, the average score for fourth-graders on the Florida Writing Assessment, which uses a scale of one through six, increased from 2.4 to 3.3.



## Research-based Reform Strategies

Although test scores indicated that students were progressing significantly in writing and mathematics by 1996, the staff was not satisfied with the level of progress students were making in reading. This was the impetus for Fienberg Fisher to actively research new reading programs that would serve students with learning disabilities and those who have limited proficiency in English. The principal, a team of teachers, and

***Research-based instruction integrates a technology-infused curriculum, intensive 75-minute literacy blocks, and a "no errors" teaching philosophy, all of which is available through both an English and a Spanish bilingual program.***

parent representatives attended a district briefing about research-based reading programs, reported the program options back to the EEC, and voted to adopt SRA Reading Mastery for the 1997-98 school year.

In addition to its built-in monitoring system, the SRA Reading Mastery program contained other features that particularly suited Fienberg Fisher: an extensive training and modeling so that more staff and parents could implement the curriculum; an organizational strategy to increase daily reading and decrease class size; and a "direct" instructional approach, using coordinated basal readers and a common instructional style, that made teaching consistent across all classrooms. According to the school's language arts coach, the detailed SRA curriculum "has a little bit for everyone," such as decoding and comprehension, thinking skills and strategies, and language and literature instruction appropriate for students at all instructional levels. Extensive staff development ensures instructional coordination and quality, and engages more adults to teach reading, reducing the student-teacher ratio for literacy instruction. The school adopted a flexible block schedule to allow the science, physical education, and bilingual specialists to teach reading, while under the watchful eye of students' primary reading teachers. That way, during the language arts block in every grade, four or five trained reading instructors are teaching small groups of students at their instructional levels.

***SRA Mastery Reading offers a little bit for everyone—decoding and comprehension; thinking skills and problem-solving strategies; and language, writing, and literature instruction—all taught in small groups by well-trained teachers.***

During this small-group time, teachers devote 75 minutes to Reading Mastery skills, phonics, vocabulary, and reading fluency. They practice a "no errors" philosophy in which every student's effort is immediately corrected, if necessary, so that students cannot fall behind their peers. In addition, students learn to recognize how to use language effectively—in the remaining 45 minutes of the language arts block, teachers extend reading instruction to include writing, literature reading, and comprehension activities. The structure and flexibility of the program give less specialized teachers and some parents guidelines for assisting with the lessons while enabling the experienced reading specialists to monitor students' progress closely and to assign appropriate supplementary activities and projects.

Fienberg Fisher also incorporates the resources of a modern computer laboratory into its instructional program. The school is a pilot center for IBM's "Eduquest," a computer-based curriculum that puts multiple resources across content areas in students' classrooms by networking computers to large software instructional libraries. Thanks to the

computerized curriculum, students can work on activities appropriate to their instructional level while teachers monitor their work. Two students from the same grade can sit side-by-side at the computer bank yet be working at two different instructional levels. In addition, ESL and LEP students can sit at a computer and get directions in Spanish for using the dual-language CD-ROMs. The Eduquest network provides computerized instructional programs, so teachers can readily make flexible decisions about appropriate assignments and students can access those programs whenever they are in class. Although some teachers were initially skeptical about using computer-based curricula to supplement their standards program, they were soon won over by its accessibility and students' responsiveness. In 1998, four teachers applied for advanced degrees in technology education to further their ability to integrate technology and teaching on students' behalf.

Fienberg Fisher has a full bilingual curriculum in all content areas and separate English instruction. Two kindergarten classrooms are piloting a two-way bilingual program in which teachers instruct students in English for a half day and in Spanish for the other half. Some students receive ESL instruction using computerized instructional programs.

The Comer philosophy is the major approach used to give students emotional support. Teachers model a style of cooperation that they encourage in students. They also share supplies and advice, and they actively communicate with one another about the children in their classes. Frequent communication among adults is especially helpful in a school where students face many personal and academic risks. "We need input from the bilingual teacher, the social worker, and the classroom teachers to best help the child…we need to get all the people together to assess the child," explained a teacher. She added that parents notice the benefits of the Comer philosophy. If a child is having a problem in school, the entire team of teachers is available at a parent conference to prescribe a supportive plan of action.

Fienberg Fisher highlights these additional instructional program features:

> SEASCOPE is an integrated, hands-on, literature-based curriculum with a marine biology theme for fourth- through sixth-graders. Teachers develop language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies curricula around novels appropriate for students at every

***Thanks to the computerized curriculum, students can work on activities appropriate to their instructional level while teachers monitor their work. Students from the same grade sit side-by-side at the computer bank and work at different instructional levels.***

grade level. The Seascope curriculum is supported by a fully equipped science laboratory and a full-time science resource teacher.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES benefit from plans developed to meet their educational and behavioral needs. Serving as "structural ladders," the plans help these students evaluate and witness their own progress and, eventually, to rejoin mainstream classrooms.

PROJECT COMET is a high-incentive program for students identified as dropout risks. It combines a career laboratory with academic classes in which students engage in hands-on activities.

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION is a small-sized dropout prevention program, implemented by one teacher and a full-time paraprofessional, that provides students with intensive personal attention and an enhanced basic skills development program.

The LIBRARY-MEDIA CENTER's media specialist integrates printed material, online data, and multimedia materials to enhance instruction for all students.

COOL SCHOOL, an after-school program, provides counseling, educational, and recreational activities for 150 at-risk students and parents. Social workers, teachers, and volunteers work in collaboration with University of Miami faculty, the Miami Beach Police Department officials, and Americorps executives to use art, drama, and community activities to provide alternatives to gang involvement and violence.

## The Professional Learning Community

"We don't do anything until we are trained," said a Fienberg Fisher veteran teacher of 13 years. Administrators, staff, parents, and community partners prepared for one year to become a Comer school by participating in a series of mini-retreats, workshops, and seminars. Having attended Yale's one-week Principals' Academy each of the past three years, Principal Nebb now conducts monthly sessions for new school staff and serves as a facilitator at the Principals' Academy.

Administrators and teachers choose topics for professional development by analyzing students' test scores. They compare achievement trends to the school's improvement plan goals and benchmarks, and they heed staff concerns raised in monthly grade level and faculty meetings. A Successful Schools grant enables the staff to assess its target goals against actual test scores in each subject, keeping teachers aware of student progress. A regional staff development team also regularly works with the staff to align the curriculum with Florida's Sunshine State Standards. Teachers also prepare students to take standardized tests, and they develop active teaching strategies that personalize learning for culturally diverse groups. Reciprocal reading and hands-on science are other seminar topics included in Fienberg Fisher's staff development programs.

Four on-site teaching coaches assist staff in using up-to-date methods to implement new language arts, technology, bilingual education, and science programs. A full-time language arts coach ensures proper implementation of SRA Mastery reading and effective preparation of students for the Florida Writing Assessment by observing teachers in classrooms, modeling lessons, making individual plans with her colleagues, and conducting specialized workshops. The technology coach trains the staff in using IBM Eduquest to teach reading, writing, and mathematics and keeps the faculty informed about new uses of the Internet at faculty meetings. As a member of the Home School Services Team, the bilingual coach assesses students' ESL levels, monitors the progress of LEP students, models ESL strategies, observes instruction, and helps teachers use appropriate ESL techniques in the classroom. Similarly, the science coach models the science instruction and conducts family science nights.





***A veteran Fienberg Fisher teacher explained, "We don't do anything until we are trained." Continuous training is available to teachers through on-site coaching, mini-retreats, workshops, and seminars.***

Fienberg Fisher also developed a 10-teacher team, trained in group dynamics and mediation, who serve as ombudsmen. These teachers help maintain open communication among the staff, address tensions within the student and school community, and serve as a liaison to parents.

## Parent and Community Partnerships

Integrating education, medical, social, and psychological assistance to students under the Comer program makes Fienberg Fisher a "full-service" school. Staff work with Florida International University, the Danforth Foundation, community partners, and families to keep these services responsive to families. A Home School Services team, including the principal, a social worker, a counselor, a psychologist, social work interns, a nurse practitioner, the curriculum resource teacher, and a teacher representative, helps reduce tensions among students and addresses emotional problems that may arise among students and within families. Students and community members can access a community-run health clinic, participate in an after-school program on gang prevention and violence reduction, and collaborate with teachers and volunteers from the local university, Miami Beach Police Department officers, and Americorps executives. The "Rainmakers," a group of parents who participate in a Danforth Foundation-funded Referral and Information Network (RAIN), opened a day-care center, known as Raindrop, and provide families with food, medical vouchers, and housing information.

Parents serve on all decision-making committees, attend PTA meetings, and contribute by working on parent patrols in the school building. They are volunteer teachers for small SRA Reading Mastery reading groups, and every other Tuesday, they attend the "Breakfast Club" where they learn about community resources, students' academic results, and parenting skills.

Fienberg Fisher's many parenting activities involve parents in the Healthy Learners Consortium, a parent-led group that meets monthly with the mayor's office, the housing authority, and family counseling services to address community concerns. The Consortium has become an advocate for the school in the community. Among its accomplishments are installing a

***School-community partnerships offer educational, medical, social, and psychological services to students and families. A skilled teaching team serves as ombudsmen, keeping communications open among the staff and the community.***

traffic light at a busy intersection and a fence around the school; it also contributed two buildings that serve 60 children in Head Start. The Bright Horizons Parent Resource Center, directed by a parent community involvement specialist, arranges adult educational services, family literacy, parent education, and parent and school networking services for parents.

## Sustaining Change

"Sharing leadership and responsibility, establishing trust, and taking risks are keys to sustaining reform," explained one assistant principal at Fienberg Fisher. It is important to develop a professional community whose members have the leadership skills to carry the change process forward. "We have a lot of leaders on our staff and I am confident in them," principal Grace Nebb says proudly. By "walking the talk" the entire faculty helps to sustain the change it has begun. The schoolwide team is committed to continually modeling, retraining, "preaching, transforming, and developing" to ensure its school is guided by a fully contributing cadre of educational leaders.

***Shared leadership built trust among Feinberg Fisher teachers, encouraging the risk-taking necessary to "walking the talk" of school improvement and change.***

# Ensuring Success for All Students

## Lincoln WorldLab Magnet Elementary School

**Palm Beach County Public Schools · Riviera Beach, Florida**

### OVERVIEW

An emphasis on early academic intervention, a strong, coherent curriculum, and coordinated instructional strategies ensure that students at Lincoln Elementary School meet or exceed grade-level benchmarks by the time they enter the sixth grade. "If we can reach students early, we can solve any problem," said Penny Collins, a literacy resource teacher who works with kindergartners and first-graders. In this cooperative learning atmosphere, students achieve at the highest academic levels while developing positive attitudes toward themselves and their peers.

Lincoln's schoolwide program, first implemented in 1993-94, uses Success For All (SFA), MathWings, and WorldLab, the three coordinated curricula developed by the Center for the Education of Students Placed at Risk (CRESPAR) at Johns Hopkins University. Having these curricula at the core of the schoolwide program has successfully minimized the fragmentation in this very large kindergarten-through-fifth-grade school that serves a largely African American, Haitian, and Hispanic student population. Extensive on-site professional development that continues within the school day promotes a common instructional philosophy and teaching style across classrooms. It works, says Penny Collins, because "students receive the same signals from [all the] teachers," and all instruction is structured similarly.



In its schoolwide budget, Lincoln combines federal resources from the Title I, Title V-Magnet, and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act programs, with funding from the Florida lottery and other state and local resources. According to principal Margaret Brockmiller, becoming a schoolwide program meant using all available funds more effectively. The result was that, without labeling, all students benefit from focused, specialized instruction.

***Lincoln serves a predominantly nonwhite student population. 87% of whom qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.***

**Grade Levels**
PreK–5

**Number of Students (1997–98)**
1,181

**Schoolwide Since**
1993–94

**Racial/Ethnic Composition**
92% African American
7% Hispanic/White/Other

## Vision, Leadership, and Decision Making

Lincoln faculty members are full participants in decisionmaking. The school's improvement plan for 1997-98 includes a comprehensive monitoring structure that outlines their roles and responsibilities to ensure that school improvement strategies are implemented.

***Two representative decision-making bodies, a faculty council and a school, parent, and community advisory committee, coordinate to review and update the school's improvement plan periodically.***

Decision making occurs through two representative structures—a faculty council from each grade and the School Advisory Committee (SAC). The faculty council meets with the principal twice monthly to discuss the school's day-to-day organizational needs and strategies for integrating the research-based reform programs with other schoolwide activities. The SAC, which meets monthly, is chaired by a parent, co-chaired by the principal, and includes parents, teachers, noninstructional staff, community members, and administrators. At least 10 members represent parents or the community, including one designated representative from the school's large Haitian community. The SAC works by consensus to maintain an updated school improvement plan. The state allocates $10 per child for the SAC to spend on school improvement activities.

## Student Performance Results

***In 1997, 29% of students scored in the top two quartiles of the CTBS test in reading, and 43% reached these levels in mathematics.***

Student performance at Lincoln is measured through eight-week SFA and MathWings instructional assessments and by state-mandated standardized tests. Teachers submit continual improvement reports to the principal every nine weeks to track student progress. They also inform parents about student progress in quarterly report cards and interim progress reports with detailed information about individuals' skill development and changing academic needs.

Each year students in grades three through five take the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) in the spring, and fourth-graders take the Florida Writing Assessment in February. The CTBS scores provide longitudinal data on individual students for three years. Between 1994 and

1997, the percent of students performing above the 50th percentile rose significantly in both reading and mathematics. In reading, the number of students above the 50th percentile rose from 18 to 29 percent during the three-year period; in mathematics, the percent jumped from 17 to 43. Based on data compiled from these scores, the school writes an annual curriculum plan, identifying areas of the test not sufficiently emphasized by the school's instructional program. Lincoln's scores on the Florida Writing Assessment have also increased steadily since 1994. Between 1994 and 1997, scores climbed from 1.6 to 2.5 on the narrative portion of the test and from 1.4 to 2.0 on the expository portion of the test. Both components are measured on a one-to-six scale. Every eight weeks, the SFA instructional assessments provide diagnostic information that teachers, in consultation with SFA facilitators, use to restructure reading groups according to appropriate skill levels.

## Research-based Reform Strategies

The three instructional programs developed by CRESPAR and Johns Hopkins University researchers—SFA, MathWings, and WorldLab—guide reading, mathematics, social studies, and science instruction in grades one through five. The programs are aligned with Florida's Sunshine State Standards, and although each one is distinct, they are integrated across subject areas and grade levels, fitting together "like a puzzle," reports principal Brockmiller.

SUCCESS FOR ALL (SFA). SFA structures the reading program for students across all grades. Homogeneous groups of students participate in daily, 120-minute uninterrupted reading and language arts instructional blocks. The SFA curriculum focuses on teaching comprehension, listening, speaking, and vocabulary skills, through multicultural stories that reflect students' cultures and heritages. The model uses literature to involve students personally in reading and to enhance their understanding of the story structures. Students learn to listen to, retell, and dramatize children's literature; to compose ideas orally and in writing; and to decode letters and sounds to support their advancing reading knowledge. SFA is a continual progress model in which students learn cooperatively. Students progress across achievement levels as they master certain skills, and

***Three Johns Hopkins-developed instructional programs,* Success For All, MathWings, *and* WorldLab *structure a coordinated academic curriculum that is fully aligned with Florida's Sunshine State Standards.***

they also develop the ability to assess their own progress and to correct their errors as they read and write. For students experiencing difficulty, tutoring and additional academic support services are immediately available so they can proceed through the reading program as quickly as their improving language skills will allow.

MATHWINGS. The MathWings program gives students the opportunity to discover, experiment with, and apply their mathematical knowledge following the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics' Curriculum and Evaluation Standards. Mathematics activities build on the practical mathematics knowledge students have when they enter school and incorporate real and simulated problem solving, skill practice, calculator use, alternative assessments, writing, and connections to literature and other disciplines. Students learn to apply multiple-problem solutions and then describe this new knowledge in their own mathematics journals. MathWings is cyclical; students at each grade level review and build on what they learned the previous year until they achieve mastery.

WORLDLAB. WorldLab is Lincoln's integrated science and social studies program in which students use written work, role playing, and cooperative teams to carry out experiments, investigations, and science and social studies projects. WorldLab adopts the same instructional strategies as does the overall SFA and MathWings programs. The program, written on various skill levels, revolves around thematic units that incorporate writing, reading, mathematics, fine arts, and music into the science and social studies curriculum.

EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES. Teachers in Lincoln's prekindergarten and kindergarten classrooms learn the SFA methods through the same training programs their colleagues participated in. It focuses on providing a balanced and developmentally appropriate learning experience for children emphasizing the development and use of language, music, art, and movement activities in a series of thematic units. This consistency of the preschool and kindergarten programs facilitates students' preparation for the first grade. Lincoln also uses the Breakthrough to Literacy Language Development Program, an interactive computer-based language development curriculum for kindergartners and selected first-graders. Each day, students explore words, letters, and sounds on computer programs aligned with all other academic components. Teachers use the same programs to continually assess students' reading progress.

***Across all content areas, students learn cooperatively and individually to achieve mastery. Students learn to assess their own progress and they develop the habit of correcting their own errors before moving ahead.***

SUPPORT SERVICES TO STUDENTS. Reteaching students who struggle to make progress through the progressively more difficult learning cycles is an important component of all aspects of SFA, and this concept carries over to all academic disciplines at Lincoln. Students receive various supplementary support services, including tutoring by specially trained paraprofessionals, drop-out prevention assistance, and mentoring through the program HOSTS—Help One Student To Succeed, which targets students in grades three through five. Those who score in the lowest quartile on the CTBS receive additional one-to-one instruction each day from one of four diagnostically trained full-time tutors. Students in the highest quartile on the CTBS may participate in the county's Structures of Intellect (SOI) curriculum, which helps eligible students prepare for the district's Gifted and Talented program. Parents are an essential part of the formula for success in SFA.

The research-based reform programs at Lincoln accommodate all students, especially those at risk, because teachers continually reassess and regroup students according to their educational needs. For designated students with limited-English proficiency, a full-time ESL teacher provides additional assistance, supplementing classroom reading instruction in the morning and individually tutoring selected students in the afternoon.

All students have access to mental health services through the support of Lincoln's Family Support Team. Two assistant principals also help resolve conflicts and organize peer mediation sessions on campus. Lincoln's discipline plan features conflict resolution and encourages the school's "Fight Free" program to help students implement the schoolwide motto, "Celebrating Peace Every Day."

## The Professional Learning Community

Lincoln's 89 teachers and 71 support and administrative staff bring a wealth of expertise to students. A multitalented professional team includes reading specialists; SFA, MathWings, and WorldLab facilitators; more than 20 special educators; art, music, physical education, computer, and ESL teachers; a counselor; and a social worker. Well-trained paraprofessionals assist professionals in implementing all aspects of the program. A parent liaison and three dropout prevention teachers are part of the overall support for students and families.

When Lincoln initially adopted the CRESPAR/Hopkins programs, all staff received two weeks of intensive preparatory training on how to use the materials and the strategies incorporated into the research-based program. Professional development continues to be available from in-school and regional facilitators. Lincoln's two in-school facilitators—one who supports SFA and one who supports both MathWings and WorldLab—work with teachers to examine students' progress summary data, structure teaching around students' needs, determine the effectiveness of lessons, and, in the case of SFA, arrange students into homogeneous reading groups. Every eight weeks, facilitators issue checklists to teachers with information on each program component to help ensure that instruction is data-driven. According to facilitator Penny Collins, "[We] help teachers question themselves and make them aware of what they're doing and not doing. They're constantly checking and rechecking [their teaching against assessments of students' progress]." SFA-sponsored network facilitators who work in the region conduct periodic implementation checks and provide continuous feedback to the principal based on summary information about student performance.

In addition to training and support in the research-based SFA models, professional development opportunities at Lincoln include the Early Literacy Inservice Course (ELIC) for primary teachers, Professional Orientation Program mentors for new teachers, grade-level discussions, and early release days so that teachers can attend in-service courses on conflict resolution, writing, alternative assessments, inclusion, and test-taking preparation.

**We help teachers question themselves by making them aware of what they're doing and not doing. They're constantly checking and rechecking their teaching against assessments of students' progress.**

**Penny Collins**
**Teacher Facilitator**
**Lincoln Elementary**

## Parent and Community Partnerships

Lincoln is deeply committed to fostering parent and community involvement in students' lives. Parents are invited to participate in several educational opportunities at the school, including the Parent Power and Parent Power Kids program, adult education/GED preparation classes, and MegaSkills parenting classes. The Parent Power program helps parents prepare young children to enter school by modeling instruction in a class for three- and four-year-olds. These and other parent involvement activities occur weekly at Lincoln, scheduled at various times throughout the day and evening.

***A Family Support Team conducts home visits, directs parents to appropriate agency services, and, when necessary, intervenes into situations at home or at school that negatively affect students' learning.***

Lincoln's Family Support Team, including Lincoln's social worker, principal, counselor, and psychologist, is a vital component of the SFA model that provides an array of services to families. The team, headed by the school's social worker, visits families of students who are exhibiting behavioral, health, or academic problems; steers families toward agencies that can assist; conducts parent outreach; plans interventions for non-school situations that affect learning; and issues attendance plans for students who have a less than 95 percent attendance rate. When needed, the Family Support Team reviews information relevant to each student; discusses the needs with the student's teacher; and identifies a case manager for each family. Lincoln's parent liaison also assists the team in contacting parents and enlisting their cooperation.

The Lincoln staff reach beyond the school to families—even to those who are unable to visit the school. They use a number of communication devices: a parent compact, a daily calendar of student work and responsibilities referred to as a "student agenda," and calendars of school events. Updated information about individual students facilitates the ongoing dialogue between parents and teachers, keeping the school and families tightly linked in support of students. Each day, students leave school with a progress report for parents that includes teachers' comments about their achievement. Parents are encouraged to talk with their students about the report and to respond with comments or questions. Quarterly curriculum nights, featuring grade-level presentations by the faculty, are a forum for parents to learn about curriculum content and instructional activities and to ask questions about testing. Parent-teacher conferences, held twice a

year, take place at the school or over the telephone. Lincoln reports all assessment results to parents, including the results of both standardized and SFA tests. Written materials released by Lincoln are translated into Spanish, and an interpreter is available to Haitian families.

## Sustaining Change

Lincoln staff report that the changes initiated by the schoolwide program are sustained by a common instructional philosophy, an understanding of what is taught in other classrooms, and a commitment to all students achieving the same high standards. Coordinating Lincoln's magnet and schoolwide programs dramatically improved the resources available to the school, principal Brockmiller reported. The research-based curriculum engages students with familiar and active experiences. It is taught similarly across all subjects by skillful master teachers who ensure their colleagues have the support they need to implement the program effectively. The Family Support Team is also an essential part of the program's success. Collaboration within and across the grades keeps the program integrated schoolwide, enabling Lincoln to stand forcefully behind its commitment to "Success For All."

***The changes Lincoln initiated in the schoolwide program are sustained by a common instructional philosophy, an understanding of what is taught in other classrooms, and a commitment to all students achieving the same high standards.***

# Commitment to Teacher Development

## Montview Elementary School

**Aurora Public Schools · Aurora, Colorado**

### OVERVIEW

High-quality initial instruction — rather than remediation — guides Montview Elementary School's schoolwide program. Believing that literacy skills foster learning in other curricular areas, Montview adopted a "balanced" literacy model that simultaneously provides opportunities for children to achieve high performance levels and for teachers to develop a high level of expertise. Under the schoolwide program banner, Montview implements ongoing professional development, coordinates all academic programs, uses a curriculum that supports high standards, and creates a school, parent, and community partnership.

In recent years, Montview has witnessed a rapid influx of students from impoverished backgrounds, many of whom are limited-English-proficient and from transient families. Montview addresses the special needs of these students with skilled English as a Second Language (ESL) staff who work alongside classroom teachers in two-hour language arts blocks. To minimize overcrowding, Montview operates a year-round academic program that is divided into four tracks, so only three-quarters of the school's students are ever in the building at one time.



Encouraged by the district's Title I office, Montview began planning in 1993 and became a schoolwide program in 1994. Its schoolwide plan, based on a comprehensive needs assessment of staff and parents, combines federal resources from the Title I, Bilingual Education Act, and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act programs and a grant from the National Education Association (NEA) with other state and local funds. According to principal Debbie Backus, Montview's schoolwide program has facilitated the process that allows all students to meet high standards: "We had always been very focused about where students needed to be.... The difference now is that we're expecting all students to overcome obstacles imposed by poverty and language and to reach the same challenging standards," she noted.

***Montview serves a high-poverty population, including 84% of students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. In a typical year, over 70% of Montview's students are newly enrolled.***

**Grade Levels**
K–5

**Number of Students (1997–98)**
856

**Schoolwide Since**
1994–95

**Racial/Ethnic Composition**
45% Hispanic
30% African American
22% White
3% Asian

***Shared beliefs and values among a balanced representation of stakeholders enables decisionmaking to occur by consensus.***

## Vision, Leadership, and Decision Making

Montview uses a consensus model to include stakeholders in key decisions about the school's program. Representative task forces convene to discuss issues and submit recommendations which are, in turn, approved through consensus by larger stakeholder groups. Ultimately, the school's accountability committee reviews recommendations and makes final decisions. This group is a state-mandated body that consists of 10 appointed and volunteer members who represent three constituent groups—administrators, teachers, and families—and reflect a balanced ethnic and school group representation. Montview's accountability committee meets monthly to make decisions, devise action plans, develop annual goals for student achievement, and monitor progress toward those goals.

The emphasis on shared leadership helps sustain Montview's whole school improvement effort by providing a system of checks and balances to ensure that all perspectives and opinions are heard. The staff's shared beliefs and values make decisionmaking by consensus possible and foster a real sense of collegiality among staff. Backus, who came to Montview 10 years ago, noted that this camaraderie had "an incredible impact" on Montview's ability to move the school improvement process forward. Although Montview experienced an initial period of turnover when it became a schoolwide program, it retained staff who are deeply committed to professional growth and high standards for all children. Backus identified her role as "the keeper of the vision" who guides the organization toward its goals.

## Student Performance Results

Montview measures student performance through three vehicles: (1) teacher-conducted formative assessments that drive instruction and help inform planning; (2) summative, standardized assessments required by the district and state; and (3) writing and mathematics assessments developed specifically for the school. Each year, Montview's accountability

committee revises the schoolwide plan according to the results of these assessments, report card data, action plan reports, and student work presented at quarterly conferences.

Teachers at Montview continually conduct formative assessments using students' daily classroom work, such as writing samples, spelling notebooks, running records, and responses to probing questions. This information helps teachers create instructional designs that promote students' progress along a developmental continuum. Formal assessments at Montview consist of the Riverside mathematics performance assessment, administered in the fall to students in grades two and five; an integrated language arts assessment by Riverside Publishers, administered in the spring to students in grade four; and reading and writing tests aligned with the state's standards and administered in grades three and four. Prior to initiating its schoolwide program, Montview worked with the Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory (McREL) to design a school-specific mathematics assessment. Each year, teachers administer a mathematics assessment and an internal reading assessment to students in grades one through five.

Student performance data from the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), reported in grade level equivalents, demonstrate that in each ethnic (African American, Hispanic, Asian, and white) and gender category, Montview's fourth-grade students surpassed Aurora School District averages in both proficient and advanced levels of reading, language, and mathematics. Overall, Montview's fourth-graders performed at a 5.0 grade level in advanced reading, 5.1 in advanced language, and 5.5 in advanced mathematics. These scores rose from 4.4, 5.0, and 5.0, respectively, in 1996. Similarly, on the fourth-grade Riverside integrated language arts assessment, a performance assessment that includes samples of students' writing, overall scores increased from 73 percent in 1995 to 92 percent in 1997. For Hispanic students, these scores jumped from 57 to 92 percent over the same period, and for African American students, from 55 to 89 percent.

***In the fall of 1996, 56% of second-graders met the state's standard on the Riverside mathematics assessment. In 1997, that percentage increased to 93%. By 1997 there was a 26% increase in the number of fifth-graders who met the test standard.***

## Research-based Reform Strategies

***Montview's teachers conducted research on literacy to develop its own research-based instructional model that adopts proven strategies to implement a balanced approach to literacy.***

During the transition to a schoolwide program, the Montview staff consulted educational research on literacy acquisition and professional development. Research into the whole-language approach by Ken and Yetta Goodman, Donald Graves, Brian Cambourne, and Marie Clay influenced staff decisions. Similarly, research on staff development models advocated by Linda Darling-Hammond and Ann Lieberman of Columbia University contributed to Montview's decision to emphasize professional learning as a means of improving student performance. "It's not an anything goes sort of culture here. We abandoned approaches that didn't work and designed our program around students'—not teachers'—needs," noted Backus.

All classrooms at Montview, regardless of students' special needs, structure language arts around the Literacy Learning Model. This model integrated into the Montview program a diagnostic and prescriptive approach to teaching developed in New Zealand and administered in the United States by the Learning Network. The model assumes that students benefit most from powerful initial instruction rather than remedial approaches. "We try to prevent breaking rather than repair what is already broken," explained Backus.

During two-hour language arts blocks, which occur in the morning for primary students and in the afternoon for intermediate students, all teachers and paraprofessionals, including specialists in serving disadvantaged, bilingual, and disabled students, provide intensive, in-class assistance to students who need additional support. These language arts blocks highlight the natural integration of speaking, listening, reading, and writing; involve small-group reading and individualized spelling instruction; and reflect the state's reading and language arts standards. Mathematics blocks follow a similar structure, emphasizing hands-on learning and problem-solving skills. The mathematics curriculum at Montview is based on state standards and on those developed by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.

***Teachers assess students' skills using everyday work to decide where on a continuum of activities students should be learning.***

Montview closely monitors students who are educationally at risk and provides intensive, individualized support when it is needed. Students for whom English is a second language are immersed in English in regular classrooms, where they receive both in-class and pull-out support

from well-trained ESL staff, including two ESL tutors and two teaching assistants. ESL tutors work with the neediest students each day in 45-minute sessions, dividing students into small groups and tailoring instruction to parallel activities taking place in classrooms. Teachers also supplement academic activities with multicultural activities developed by the district. Montview serves approximately 12 students with severe disabilities separately, but mainstreams them during the language arts blocks. It also offers at-risk readers additional one-on-one tutoring using a reading program known as Success in Primary Reading (SUPR).

Computer technology is a powerful tool for supporting classroom instruction at Montview. Computers are located in every classroom and in the school's media center, so they are readily available for students to use when conducting research or when editing and publishing their original writing. A "miracle classroom," sponsored by Apple Computers, Inc., adds state-of-the-art technology to the school's instruction resource base for fourth- and fifth-graders. According to Backus, the students in the Apple classroom have a deeper appreciation of product quality and are "really engaged in learning." Technology is also available to all students as an elective, along with art, music, physical education, and communications.

***Students conduct research and "publish" their original writing on computers that are located throughout the school in every classroom and in the media center.***

An "affective education" department provides a temporary, alternative setting to students whose behavior problems are a barrier to their success in the regular classroom. These students receive one-on-one instruction and personalized attention from two full-time teachers. With the support of the families, the staff strives to buoy students' capacity to function successfully in the classroom. The affective teachers, trained in the Literacy Learning Model, offer reading and writing activities that parallel the instruction occurring in the students' classrooms. This "revolving door classroom," where students come only for short periods of time, has successfully kept Montview's suspension rate one of the lowest in the district.

## The Professional Learning Community

***The Aurora Public Schools' "Grow Your Own" program urges paraprofessionals, volunteers, and uncertified adults with bachelor's degrees—especially those who are male, nonwhite, or second-language speakers—to obtain teaching certificates.***

Montview supports teachers individually as well. All staff—including classroom teachers, speech and language specialists, literacy specialists, paraprofessionals, counselors, the community liaison, assistant principal, and principal—learn to use the Literacy Learning Model. Training includes a four-day "literacy learning in the classroom" course, which provides a basic understanding of the approach's four constructs: the reading process, the writing process, conditions for learning, and the teaching-learning cycle.

Individualized and ongoing professional development is available to teachers from master teachers trained by the Learning Network. Teacher leaders, specializing in either mathematics or reading, provide literacy-learning training. One of the facilitators serves as a full-time teacher leader, and the others divide their time between classroom teaching and mentoring. Classroom teachers consult with the Learning Network teacher leader once each week to discuss personal action plans and to monitor students' progress toward state standards. Teacher leaders also visit classrooms and observe teachers' work on areas defined in their personal action plan; afterward, they meet to discuss further improvements. Each quarter, teachers also confer individually with either the principal or assistant principal to discuss students' progress toward state standards and to determine whether program adjustments are needed.

On-the-job mentoring available to teachers includes topic-centered study groups, the Learning Network conference and institute, in-service training sessions, and 90-minute, after-school "dialogues" facilitated by teacher leaders. The dialogues feature topics determined by teachers, and can vary each week. The informal discussions foster collegiality and ensure that teachers "share the same understandings and help each other with individual challenges," principal Backus reports. Most important, they encourage a shared vision of the teaching craft and increase consistency in theory and practice across classrooms.

Two preprofessional training programs also give the staff at Montview an opportunity to contribute to the professional growth of emerging teachers. The Aurora Public Schools' "Grow Your Own" program urges paraprofes-

sionals, volunteers, and uncertified adults with bachelor's degrees—especially those who are male, nonwhite, or second-language speakers—to obtain teaching certificates. Montview is also a professional development school in partnership with the University of Colorado at Denver; student teachers design their own personal action plans, work with teachers, learn to continually assess students, and plan accordingly.

## Parent and Community Partnerships

Montview has several structures in place to encourage parents' involvement in their children's education both at home and in school. The school hosts family nights, maintains a parent-teacher organization, translates all relevant materials into Spanish, and makes an effort to hire parents for key school positions, especially bilingual parents. "Parents are a wonderful link to the community and can encourage other parents to get involved," said Backus.

Montview employs a full-time parent coordinator/community liaison to assist families—many of whom are recent immigrants to the United States—to identify and access resources, obtain employment, and locate housing. The community liaison serves on the family service team—a group that also includes the affective education teachers, a counselor, nurse, social worker, and principal—that intervenes to improve situations in which students exhibit continual behavioral, social, academic, and/or emotional problems.

Approximately 90 percent of Montview's families attend quarterly student conferences. The conferences are student-led, with students presenting their portfolios and performing for parents and teachers. The high parent turnout at these conferences is attributed to the fact that parents have a solid understanding of the literacy learning model and can track their child's progress on the school's learning continuum. Montview also makes available Spanish translators to help parents interpret their child's test scores. "Although the printed materials are translated into Spanish, making personal contact is more effective because parents often have difficulty understanding educational jargon and want to ask questions," said Backus.

***Continuing on-the-job professional inquiry creates a community of learners that is committed to implementing consistent instructional practices across classrooms.***

*Each quarter parents attend conferences with their student and his or her teacher. The students lead the conference, demonstrating their progress through displays, performances, and portfolios of their work.*

Under a grant from the NEA, Montview is designing a parent involvement center where families can access educational and other resources. According to Backus, the parent involvement center will work with parents to stimulate their child's development and will be a "place where parents can come together as a community." In time, the center will offer parenting classes; English classes; Spanish interpretation; job placement services; GED classes; referrals for food, clothing, and shelter; and books and toys to use on-site and to check out for use at home.

## Sustaining Change

The job of sustaining school improvement is a big one. Backus observes, "We're always working at it; [but] we're never quite there." In her view, Montview gains its momentum from the staff's commitment to implementing a research-based academic program and a common instructional philosophy. Backus attributes the school's strength to its willingness to share authority and to involve all stakeholders in decisions. Furthermore, the staff holds to a vision that a school is a learning organization and recognizes that systemic improvement is a long-term process. In this collegial atmosphere, Backus notes, professional development is a resource that increases teachers' success and minimizes their risk of burnout.

# A Beacon of Excellence

## P. S. 172

### Community School District 15 · Brooklyn, New York

### OVERVIEW

Since becoming a schoolwide program in 1993-94, P.S. 172 has implemented a literacy-focused curriculum, coordinated through intensive professional development, to help all students achieve high standards. According to principal Jack Spatola, "By becoming a schoolwide project, we do not target a specific group of children; instead we assist the struggling students by strengthening the entire school."

P.S. 172 combines funds from Goals 2000, the Bilingual Education Act, state comprehensive and compensatory education, and Title I to accomplish schoolwide success. In addition, P.S. 172 received a three-year New York Partnership for Arts and Education/Annenberg grant to integrate the arts and the academic curriculum, along with a $1,500 grant from the New York State Assembly to purchase additional instructional materials. Since 1997, P.S. 172 has also joined forces with other schools in Community School District 15 to pilot locally adapted standards developed by the New Standards Project.



***P.S. 172 serves a predominantly low-income, minority population, including 25% of LEP students.***

**Grade Levels**
K–6

**Number of Students (1997–98)**
1,181

**Schoolwide Since**
1993–94

**Racial/Ethnic Composition**
76% Hispanic
13% White
8% Asian/Other
3% African American

*Listening to teachers ensured staff ownership of the reform effort.*

## Vision, Leadership, and Decision Making

"Our vision is to make sure all kids...are challenged at the maximum level," explained Spatola. Over the past 10 years, P.S. 172 has adopted a continuous improvement model to better meet the needs of its linguistically and ethnically diverse students. P.S. 172 uses its Site-based Development Team (SDT) of 17 members, representing administration, parents, teachers, the guidance counselor, community members, classroom aides, and support staff, to evaluate school activities and to address stakeholder concerns and set attainable higher education standards. Teachers and parents also contribute to decisionmaking through school subcommittees on parent involvement, health and safety issues, technology concerns, and library services.

Consensus-based decisionmaking has helped P.S. 172 articulate and implement its schoolwide plan, reported assistant principal Tina Volpe. Before P.S. 172 became a schoolwide program, teachers, counselors, and service providers could meet and discuss school issues, but they had no decision-making authority. Volpe notes that increasing teachers' voices in school operations generated staff ownership of the whole-school reform effort: "What teachers do in their classroom is no longer dictated..., [so] they can create a program that meets the unique needs of their students. In schoolwides, ...the pyramid has been reversed and the principal is no longer at the top telling teachers what to do, but at the bottom supporting them."

To write and renew the yearly schoolwide plan at P.S. 172, the SDT annually solicits ideas from parents and staff through surveys prepared in both English and Spanish. Teachers in monthly grade-level meetings also make suggestions regarding school operations. Each spring, the SDT integrates this information into its final Comprehensive Educational Plan and presents the revised schoolwide plan to parents at a PTA meeting. To be implemented, the plan must be approved by more than 75 percent of all staff and parents.

## Student Performance Results

The data-driven academic program at P.S. 172 provides teachers with several indicators to assess ongoing student performance, including information from daily conferences with students, teacher observations, and the results of standardized tests. Teachers' advocacy for using multiple assessments to monitor progress, combined with the school's collaboration as a New Standards project partner, convinced the SDT to use portfolios and to monitor them by implementing a benchmarking evaluation system. Portfolios, consisting of teachers' observations, teacher-made tests, checklists, and student work samples, build on information from the standardized tests. The staff reports that portfolios allow them to assess both student work and the quality of their own instruction. Teacher observations and daily conferences with students play a key role in matching instruction and reading materials with each child's skill level.

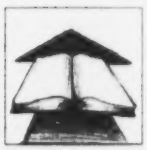
Data from these varied assessments determine students' placement into small learning groups and into their regular grade-level classrooms. By concentrating on the achievement record, learning style, and personal needs of every child, teachers can balance classroom assignments so that each classroom serves equal numbers of students at every skill level.

Since 1994-95, P.S. 172's third- and sixth-grade reading and mathematics scores on the New York State assessments have exceeded district and city averages and have been well above the scores for their peers attending area schools. The SDT and teachers analyze standardized test results each spring to identify each student's academic needs; the principal then reviews the scores to gain an overview of progress. In addition, the school disseminates students' scores in English and Spanish to parents annually.

***Students in grades 3–6 have consistently scored above the districtwide average in both reading and mathematics on New York City's annual assessment.***

P.S. 172

57



## Research-based Reform Strategies

Literacy and the developmental learning needs of students who are not proficient in English are two central schoolwide concerns for P.S. 172. In kindergarten, the High Scope curriculum encourages hands-on learning and guides children through lessons containing language, mathematics, and critical thinking experiences. According to Volpe, this program is especially effective for students whose understanding of English is limited because it helps structure their day while incorporating the flexibility and movement that kindergartners need. High Scope's method teaches children to plan, execute, and review their activities and gives them the opportunity to pursue their own emerging interests.

***P.S. 172 meets the needs of all students through its emphasis on literacy and assessment-driven planning.***

The school's literacy program incorporates various successful approaches across the grades. The teachers in kindergarten through second grade use Open Court materials, a phonics-based reading program that has helped students who are acquiring English and who need to build their vocabulary. Intensive collaboration among primary and intermediate teachers gives primary students access to reading anthologies made up of both classic and contemporary literature. The reading program is supplemented, throughout the grades, by a writing component. Students' original writings are bound and catalogued so that they can be shared with others. Novels available in each classroom broaden students' reading choices after third grade. Teachers also use creative dramatics and puppetry to bring literature to life.

"Making Connections," a multicultural literature-based program, introduces third- through sixth-graders to social studies and language arts in the context of the novels. In each unit of study, heterogeneously grouped students access theme-based, nonfiction books at all skill levels. The "Voyage of the Mimi" social studies and science program for fifth-graders uses a "multimodality" approach—computers, videos, writing, reading, and research. The Internet also gives students access to additional study materials. One class studied China for six weeks. Although the whole class read one novel about China together during the structured reading period, students each selected a library book appropriate to their reading

level to use during social studies, language arts, and creative dramatics. According to Volpe, this permits students, even those who are experiencing reading difficulty, to learn grade-level content in the core subjects. "When kids struggle with reading, they often miss out on instruction in the other concept areas," she said. "This program is successful because we can order books on a particular topic that includes all achievement levels and allows flexibility so all kids can learn at their own pace." Reading multicultural literature in class exposes students to new ideas while affirming their home cultures. The program has been so successful that P.S. 172 teachers collaborated across grades to design their own campuswide guides for teaching novels.

To enhance their writing, second-graders participate in a writing program developed by Columbia University's Teacher's College. A schoolwide "author's program" has student groups in different grades read the same books and conduct cross-grade discussions of plot and characters. Between the primary and upper grades, students write letters to one another describing what they have read. Volpe notes that hearing about the book from an older or younger peer stimulates thought and allows students in different grades to learn from one another.

The schoolwide program enabled P.S. 172 to reduce overcrowding by adopting flexible team teaching in grades three through six. One-third of the school's students participate each day in small group instruction in mathematics, science, and literature, while others are in flexible reading and mathematics groups, according to their assessed achievement levels. Teachers supplement these sessions with intensive skill development for struggling students. In addition, teaching teams offer "double doses" of instruction to students who have difficulty without requiring them to miss important activities in their regular classrooms.

Learning that takes place during the school day at P.S. 172 is reinforced in an after-school program that focuses on reading and theater arts, including creative dramatics and puppetry. This is particularly helpful to LEP students whose English-speaking skills are strengthened through songs, plays, and communication with other students.



***The P.S. 172 literacy program embraces both phonics and literacy by encouraging all students to read fiction and nonfiction available from in-class libraries. Students' writing is bound and catalogued so it can be readily shared with others.***

## The Professional Learning Community

Teachers at P.S. 172 are the basis of its success, according to Spatola; they "share the vision and...make it a reality." The energetic P.S. 172 faculty includes both veteran and new teachers who are continually searching for ways to adapt and improve instruction. Jackie Mammolito, a master teacher and full-time staff development specialist, spends several days in classrooms with each new teacher, mentoring and helping them design instruction that uses their teaching style strengths to serve students well. She is also available to support seasoned teachers, demonstrating new or innovative instructional techniques and adapting instruction to fully support students' academic progress.

Professional development encourages teachers to learn from one another. Frequent grade-level and cross-grade discussions, in which teachers share their expectations and concerns about issues that arise in class, improve the coherence of instruction. In these discussions, staff members discuss their shared expectations for students and the issues that arise at each grade level. Throughout the year, teachers observe students and trade examples of their work, a process that increases continuity across classrooms.

***Teacher-planned professional development emphasizes mentoring, cross-class observation, and integrating learning and the arts.***

Teachers attend inservices offered by the school and district and take courses from area universities. In some cases, the universities come to the school. A faculty member from Columbia's Teacher's College offers demonstration lessons in writing in kindergarten, first-, and second-grade classrooms. Teachers from the other grades have release time to observe those lessons and to spend additional consultation time with the professor. The Greenwall Foundation, a private organization affiliated with New York's Center for Educational Change, provides mathematics and science assistance to teachers six times a year. In each visit, expert teachers conduct demonstration lessons, facilitate teacher workshops, observe in classrooms, and offer individualized faculty assistance. Funding from the New York City Partnership for the Arts and the Walter J. Annenberg Foundation brings teaching artists to P.S. 172 from the Center for Educational Change at Brooklyn College and from the Brooklyn Museum. Through the three-year program, artists demonstrate in each group of

classrooms how teachers can incorporate the arts into their instruction. The grant also enables teachers to collaborate with local museums to bring lessons alive for students by borrowing historical and artistic artifacts that can be integrated into teaching and project work.

## Parent and Community Partnerships

Parents have responded favorably to P.S. 172's transition to a schoolwide program. Attendance at PTA meetings has increased over the past several years, and many parents have become more active participants in their children's education. P.S. 172 sustains these relationships with newsletters, letters, and fliers about academic programs and school events, which are available to families in several languages. Routine school announcements and teachers' notes keep parents informed about their children's progress. After the first two weeks of school, teachers host Parent Teas to allow parents to visit their children's classrooms and meet their teachers. Parent/teacher conferences occur a minimum of twice each year, and, in addition, teachers schedule conferences whenever necessary.

School guidelines require teachers to inform parents immediately if a student scores below expectations on the state's standardized assessment. If promotion is doubtful, or if the child has been recommended for special services, a school support team including a psychologist, a guidance counselor, a social worker, and an educational evaluator interprets the child's needs to the family and offers any additional assistance that may be warranted. To encourage parent participation in the school, P.S. 172 holds annual education fairs to suggest how parents can help at home to ensure their children's academic success.

***Parents have responded favorably to P.S. 172's transition to a schoolwide program. Attendance at PTA meetings has increased over the past several years, and parents have become more active participants in their children's education.***

## Sustaining Change

In Spatola's view, the biggest challenge P.S. 172 faced when it first became a schoolwide program was "getting all staff and parents to buy into the vision that all kids can learn." Extensive professional development, modeling, and visits to other successful schools have made that vision the culture at P.S. 172. Spatola keeps his eye on the future, however, and is committed to sustaining the improvement they have achieved in recent years. "What happens is that the more successful you are, the more work you have because people are pulling on you from many different directions," he said. "We have to make sure we continue to improve and surpass the success we have already experienced."

***Teachers at P.S. 172 are committed to improve and surpass the success they have already experienced.***

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

# A Standards-Based, Arts-Integrated Schoolwide Curriculum

## Worcester Arts Magnet School

**Worcester Public Schools · Worcester, Massachusetts**

### OVERVIEW

Reflecting on her initial interest in the schoolwide concept, principal Margaret Venditti said, "We were not only becoming a schoolwide, but we were designing a citywide magnet at the same time. The two efforts blended together.... Suddenly, we [had the flexibility to] think about how to make the whole school a better place for learning."

The state's ambitious academic program, defined in curriculum frameworks for every academic subject, is the focus of education at Worcester Arts. According to Venditti, the arts are the "motivational tools and instruments with which to broaden children's understanding, skill, and knowledge." All students, not just those targeted by a specific program, use a host of artistic experiences to achieve the state's high standards.

Worcester Arts Magnet combines federal Title I, Bilingual Education Act, and special education funds with state and local funding resources and grant awards earned competitively from numerous state and local organizations.

***Located in a valley between two low-income housing communities, Worcester Arts serves students from the neighborhood and throughout the city.***

**Grade Levels**
PreK–6

**Number of Students (1997–98)**
453

**Schoolwide Since**
1992–93

**Racial/Ethnic Composition**
50% White
44% Hispanic
6% African American

## Vision, Leadership, and Decision Making





***The Worcester Arts program offers a balanced education for the whole child, intellectually, aesthetically, and linguistically.***

A small group of school faculty, parents, and district personnel saw the promise of creating an arts magnet at Worcester. "It was the best way to bring this school back to life," Venditti recalls. So "we met and met and met," bringing in district and state consultants and specialists when needed to help create the kind of program the planning team envisioned. Then-Chapter I coordinator, John Corcoran, also recognized the benefits of the schoolwide program, and he worked with the design team as it hammered out its plan, a process that continued for a year. Team members distributed newsletters to parents and faculty, surveyed the parents in both Spanish and English, and urged the community to become involved. They were committed to developing a "balanced education for the whole child, intellectually, aesthetically, and linguistically," using a full-inclusion model that opened learning opportunities to all children. The school continues to closely monitor assessment results and "checks the pulse of the community regularly;" Venditti reports they are always asking: "Are we meeting the goals of various programs? Are we accomplishing improvement goals for students?"

A fluid steering committee works under the principal's direction to keep the Worcester Arts program running smoothly. This is a "loose group" of teachers and administrators, says Venditti. "We can deal with anything, discipline, curriculum, [teachers' ideas and concerns].... It's an idea forum...a continuing needs assessment team ranging from 20 to 25 people. The size depends on the topic," she explains. There is also an elected body, the School Governance Council, which is composed of parents and faculty, that meets monthly to consider schoolwide issues, including budgets, school improvement matters, and student activities.

***Through the School Governance Council and other school committees, teachers and parents regularly advise the principal on the budget, school improvement, and student achievement.***

Teachers and parents form a powerful partnership at Worcester Arts Magnet. In 1996-97, 18 committees—each comprising a mix of teachers, support staff, administrators, and parents—undertook a self-study to attain accreditation from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. Over the course of a full year, the committees prepared a detailed status report about the school and reasserted the school's commitment to its unique integrated arts and academic program. According to

the school's mission statement: "Our faculty strives to... integrate the arts in everyday lessons [because] they help students tap into their creative strengths, raising their self-esteem and enabling them to experience both academic and artistic success."

## Student Performance Results

"The term 'accountability' has hit home," principal Venditti reports. "The ownership is really there. We are always asking, 'How can we prove we're successful?'" Teachers use portfolios, scored against a teacher-student developed rubric, combined with their own observations, to guide everyday instruction. In addition to standardized assessment scores, every student receives quarterly and interim report cards, twice yearly arts progress reports, and a teacher-designed checklist that keeps parents informed about students' behavior and academic progress.

***For 1996-97, Worcester Arts Magnet achieved the state's sixth-highest relative gain in state assessment scores.***

The accountability orientation has so increased the faculty's commitment to using test results that, in 1996, Worcester Arts Magnet students achieved the state's sixth-highest relative gain on the Massachusetts Educational Assessment Program. Academic progress continues to grow in all other tested content areas as well. Each year, students at every grade level take a commercially developed test: the Stanford Achievement Test, the Iowa Reading Test, the Metropolitan Achievement Tests, or the new Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System. All bilingual students take the Ideal Proficiency Test and the Language Assessment Scale.

The central office prepares disaggregated test reports annually, and grade-level teaching teams scrutinize the results in light of students' portfolios and teachers' observations of student progress in their classrooms. Faculty members use these periodic analyses to redirect the academic program.

Parents receive a copy of all test results and a district-developed assessment information handbook. At periodic parent and teacher meetings on assessment, the curriculum specialist interprets the overall school and individual student's test results and helps parents understand how the school uses them on behalf of students.

## Research-based Reform Strategies

The Worcester Arts curriculum is a faculty-designed framework of concepts and teaching processes that is oriented toward encouraging children's critical thinking, questioning, and problem solving by fully integrating the arts. These unifying principles—based on state and national curriculum standards—are the basis of specific grade-level objectives that structure the schoolwide curriculum. Under the direction of the full-time curriculum specialist, research-based teaching strategies complement the approaches already in use. Curriculum writing teams periodically reconvene to determine whether program modifications are necessary based on the most recent student achievement results and observations from colleagues and parents.

Literacy is at the heart of the schoolwide program at Worcester Arts Magnet. Students learn to read using a "balanced" language arts program that teaches phonics, literature, and writing as a way for students to better understand their world. The reading program also involves learning with parents and fellow students, poetry writing and reading, journal writing, performing, listening to stories on tapes, making charts, corresponding with pen pals, and writing and illustrating original stories. The arts teachers, along with the curriculum specialists and other support personnel, join regular classroom teachers during reading instruction so that instructional groups are as small as possible. Literacy is taught across the content areas when students study native cultures in social studies or promote a healthy community environment through their science program. Reading Recovery is available to lower-grade students who are not keeping up with their peers; a specialist in the Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) Program supports readers at risk in the third and fourth grades. A creative writing specialist visits each classroom for 50 minutes a week as part of the arts block.

Learning occurs actively at Worcester Arts. As early as preschool, students prepare performances and exhibitions and display their work in classrooms and in hallways throughout the school. Each third- through sixth-grade student produces a research project or an exhibit and discusses it at the annual Projects Fair. Some students also serve as classroom "facilitators" in lower-grade classrooms. As part of the "Drop Everything and Read in School Today" program, teachers pair "emerging readers" with more experienced, upper-grade readers to help struggling students improve underdeveloped reading skills.

***Curriculum writing teams periodically reconvene to determine whether program modifications are necessary based on the most recent student achievement results and observations from colleagues and parents.***

Although Howard Gardner's research on multiple intelligences is the intellectual foundation for arts-integrated instruction at Worcester Arts, other research-based programs complement the core curriculum. After reviewing student portfolios, teachers decided that students were adept at rote mathematics but appeared to be missing broader concepts. They adopted the *Number Worlds* program, an interactive, hands-on mathematics program that develops mathematical skills by letting students use manipulative tools to build on their spontaneous thinking about numbers. *Dimensions of Learning* and the *Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) Laboratory* promote problem-centered teaching and learning and support students who require more direct lessons on how to use their analytical thinking more effectively.

The physical environment is the organizing theme for the science curriculum. Students study recycling as the content theme but they apply scientific concepts through the arts program. Some examples of activities that students undertake in science include recycling materials to design and build a robot, writing poetry about recycling and setting poems to music, and sharing what they learn about the environment in their projects, their poetry, and their music. In the upper grades, students use Science Through Experimental Procedures to conduct experiments and keep journals detailing what they learn each day.

Each grade level is fully staffed with certified teachers, supported by certified bilingual and special education teachers and classroom assistants. All teachers co-teach to reduce pupil-to-teacher ratios. Worcester Arts supports a growing population of Spanish-speaking students with ESL and bilingual classes. To help non-English-speakers achieve the same high standards as other students, the bilingual program coordinates its learning objectives, scope and sequence charts, and lesson plans with the other teachers. Bilingual students use native language textbooks that mirror those used in the student program; that way, when they transition out of bilingual classes, their core knowledge of the major disciplines is on the same level as their English-fluent peers.

A student support team, including the principal, the curriculum specialist, and current and former classroom teachers, is available to students facing continuing academic risks. Together the team identifies specific weaknesses and, after consultation with parents, determines how to help the student overcome the identified problems. Some possible solutions may include additional time for mathematics or reading instruction, a small instructional group setting for a particular subject area, or psychological testing for specific learning disabilities.

***Learning occurs actively at Worcester Arts. Beginning in preschool, students share "expeditions" with one another and with parents through performances or through displays in classrooms and throughout the school's hallways. Both parents and students become involved in reading and writing poetry, journal writing, and corresponding with pen pals through the Internet.***

***All teachers co-teach to reduce pupil-to-teacher ratios.***

## The Professional Learning Community

***Staff development is one of the sustaining forces at Worcester Arts. "We're using a supportive model, not just one-shot programs," Principal Margaret Venditti explains.***

Venditti considers staff development one of the sustaining forces at Worcester Arts. "We're using a supportive model, not just one-shot programs," she explains. Worcester Arts Magnet employs 32 full-time staff members, most of whom are continually involved in extending their own learning. The school's plan for professional development encourages staff to work collaboratively on a common goal and to share any knowledge acquired in the many workshops, conferences, and courses they attend. In a typical year, faculty participate in more than 40 different courses and workshops. More than half of the staff have been working on their masters' degree or, in some cases, have received a second or third masters' degree since they joined the faculty. Three staff members were awarded a sabbatical year at Harvard University and returned to the school to share the results of their studies or introduce the programs they initiated while on leave.

Teachers' areas of expertise include elementary education, the arts and cognition, special education, creative arts in learning, administration, planning, and social policy. One teacher participated in a museum education project to help kindergartners develop observation and experimentation skills through art. One of the Harvard scholars focused her studies on parent involvement and conducted workshops increasing parent involvement through decisionmaking and participation. Other workshops that Worcester Arts Magnet staff attended have addressed family involvement in children's education, classroom management, parenting, family literacy, and an introduction to using Macintosh computers. As staff participate in citywide assessment workshops, they return to share their knowledge with their colleagues. Finally, preschool and kindergarten teachers' participation in the National Association for the Education of Young Children's accreditation program eventually resulted in the accreditation of the Worcester Arts early childhood program.

***In a typical year, faculty participate in more than 40 different courses and workshops. More than half of the staff have been working on their masters' degree or, in some cases, have received a second or third masters' degree since they joined the faculty.***

Professional development at Worcester Arts is based on individual as well as building-level needs. New teachers are brought into the traditions of the arts-integrated approach by collegial mentors, and the school continually surveys the staff to assess areas in which they need additional training. New staff "need the opportunities to become as proficient as others—especially in the arts and how to integrate them

throughout the curriculum," Venditti explains. Evaluation is also integral to the professional development process. In the fall, as part of the annual staff evaluation, Venditti and each staff member review the past year's achievements and set new professional development goals for the coming year.

## Parent and Community Partnerships

Parents have been essential to the program's continuing success, Venditti proudly reports. The magnet concept was initiated by 17 families, and the school now brings more than half of its students from outside of the school boundaries. More than 200 families volunteer their time in various school activities: they help substitute in classes during staff development days, read to children, organize book fairs, sew costumes, and assist with many arts activities. The school's Parent Teacher Organization also provides each teacher with $150 to conduct field trips or purchase supplementary materials for their classrooms.

The doors are open at Worcester Arts early in the morning and late into the night. The extended day for students provides one hour of extra time for special arts, music, and drama activities, including a student chorus and instrument lessons. A Community Partnerships Grant provides child care for families who work or attend school for 30 hours a week. This collaborative serves up to 20 preschoolers through third-graders and is open on school vacations and school delay days.

Fliers in both Spanish and English invite parents to attend school meetings, where babysitting is available for children without other adult-supervised care. A bilingual staff member interprets for parents who do not speak English, and she often conveys their concerns to the school's various governance councils. In addition to the fliers and periodic information sheets, the principal and teachers each write and distribute newsletters to the community. A monthly calendar featuring field trips, special programs, and other events is also available in English and Spanish. Worcester Arts' bilingual counselor and psychologist assist students and their families, and, in preparation for preschool, a bilingual family liaison conducts home visits to families with two-year-olds.



***The doors are open at Worcester Arts early in the morning and late into the night. An arts-centered extended day program provides afterschool opportunities for students to participate in a wide array of arts programs.***

Community service is important to the staff and to the school community. Some examples of annual activities for students and their families include a bottle and can drive to raise money for Thanksgiving Baskets, a holiday fair to raise money for a local project supplying gifts to needy families, and a canned goods drive to help a local food bank. The staff and students assist at the Medical Center of Central Massachusetts. Parents and children fill "love bowls" with candy every month for patients receiving chemotherapy and radiation treatments. They also decorate monthly bulletin boards in the patient waiting area. The school values this exchange, "a bridge to life outside of school," because it instills in students a sense of responsibility and commitment to the broader community.

## Sustaining Change

Principal Venditti reports that one of her greatest challenges is "keeping up with the vast amount of research on teaching and learning...to make sure you don't just hop on the bandwagon because something is in vogue, but because you know that it works...and that it is based on a solid foundation of research...." District-level expertise has been crucial in building a research-based program. Most recently, the district office has offered programs on balancing literacy through phonics, whole language, and student assessment, including portfolio and other authentic assessments.

***Keeping up with the rapidly advancing research on teaching and learning is a major challenge to sustaining the momentum at Worcester Arts Magnet.***

It is hard to keep a collaborative organization moving, Venditti acknowledges. "It takes so much time to involve people, it's hard to schedule, and teachers are tired." But she takes pleasure in the degree to which people rally around the school. Parents and teachers feel joint ownership of the school's major plans and activities, and the faculty has been very stable. Worcester Arts' administrative approach combines dedication and patience with two basic organizational principles: meetings that have tight agendas and a system for implementing what has been planned together. The process works well, confirms Barbara Ann Masley, the curriculum coordinator who chaired the school's self-study. According to her introduction to the school's accreditation report, at Worcester Arts Magnet, the community has created a school where "the whole is much larger than the sum of the parts."

# Secondary Schools

**King Middle School**
Preparing Students for Real-World Experiences

**Gompers Secondary School**
Achieving a World-Class Standard in a
Safe, Culturally Diverse Setting

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# New Opportunities for Secondary Schools

The 1994 reauthorization of ESEA placed a priority on serving the highest-poverty schools, regardless of grade level. As a result, secondary schools can use funds from ESEA and other federal and state initiatives to upgrade academic programs and link them to school-to-work and vocational opportunities. Secondary schoolwide planning can blur the lines across grades, departments, and subject areas to offer multi-disciplinary instruction in collaboration with local businesses and education institutions. These collaborations tear down the walls that divide the school and the community and establish relationships and activities where secondary students can:

- Concentrate on building high-level academic and technical skills
- Learn actively in an expanded range of cognitive and career areas
- Work with teachers in small learning communities, such as schools within schools
- Receive personal support from college or adult mentors
- Use technology to enhance learning and develop workplace skills
- Obtain information on careers and postsecondary education and training
- Prepare early for college and careers by forming ties with businesses and postsecondary institutions

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

# Preparing Students for Real-World Experiences

## King Middle School

**Portland School Department · Portland, Maine**

### OVERVIEW

At the King Middle School, according to its mission statement, "All kids can learn and show it." King Middle School's instructional program revolves around hands-on, active learning experiences that prepare students for real-life challenges. In 1993-94, King adopted the Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound (ELOB) school improvement model, a New American Schools (NAS) design. Student learning occurs in ELOB through purposeful, rigorous, and interdisciplinary "learning expeditions" that involve intellectual, community service, and physical activities. These expeditions encourage in-depth study of topics that students select. The culmination of expedition work is a "product" that demonstrates what a student has learned.

King serves students in grades six through eight in six autonomous "houses"—two at each grade level—that has five teachers and approximately 100 students. In four of the houses, teachers work with the same group of students for two consecutive years. Although King's curriculum accommodates the many different ways that students learn, the school challenges all students to meet the same high standards and expects them to produce high-quality work. "It's not a touchy-feely kind of learning," said Angela Jolliffe, a former teacher who was a key player in designing the school's curriculum. Expeditionary learning is serious, hard work in ELOB schools.



King began its transition to becoming a schoolwide program in 1992, at the same time that it became a middle school. As the school improvement team embarked on its in-depth needs assessment, its analysis of achievement indicators showed that academic success and socioeconomic status appeared to be disturbingly correlated. "We found that we were running two schools—one for the haves and one for the have-nots," said Principal Michael McCarthy. "We needed a dramatic experience to get King out of a rut and promote trust among members of the school community." The King team decided to unify its staff, materials, and funding—including ESEA Title I, Eisenhower Professional Development, and Migrant programs—to fully support the ELOB program that had begun several years before. "The marriage of the Outward Bound and schoolwide philosophies enable us to ensure that every child has a shot at success," McCarthy explained.

***More than 28 languages are spoken at King, where 65% of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.***

**Grade Levels**
6–8

**Number of Students (1997–98)**
606

**Schoolwide Since**
1995–96

**Racial/Ethnic Composition**
74% White
12% African American
11% Asian
3% Hispanic

**The marriage of the Outward Bound and Schoolwide philosophies enabled us to ensure that every child has a shot success.**

Michael McCarthy, Principal
King Middle School
Portland, ME

## Vision, Leadership, and Decision Making

King's school improvement team – a seven-member elected body of teachers, administrators, and parents – assumes leadership for school improvement. It wrote the schoolwide plan, monitored progress toward schoolwide goals, and encouraged King's participation in ELOB. The SIT seeks a balanced membership of staff and parents so that both constituencies have a voice. It follows a formal decision-making process governed by agreed-on norms and procedures. Working under a unified philosophy clarifies decision-making roles and ensures that academic results are documented accurately and are readily available to all members of the school community.

School decisions are made according to the "ABCD process." An "A" decision is an executive decision made by the principal; "B" and "C" decisions involve staff and SIT members who achieve consensus; and individual houses make "D" decisions, those that pertain primarily to the content and organization of learning expeditions and instruction in each house. According to McCarthy, most decisions that affect the schoolwide program are "B" or "C" decisions.

Teachers' authority in spearheading ELOB and related professional development initiatives also fosters collegial relationships and shared decisionmaking. Teachers are free to determine how best to use their time, control the house's budget, and develop curriculum.

## Student Performance Results

***Between the fall of 1994 and fall 1996, eighth-grade scores on the Maine Educational Assessment increased in all seven subjects, surpassing the state averages in all but one content area.***

King places great emphasis on students' culminating project work, which is evaluated against staff-designed rubrics and product descriptors. Teachers measure student performance through observations, in-class assessments, public performances and presentations, portfolios, student self-evaluations, pre- and post-reading and writing scores, and state standardized tests.

King's scores on the Maine Educational Assessment (MEA), an open-ended test in seven disciplines that reports scores on a scale of 100 to 400 points, have climbed steadily since 1994. Between the fall of 1994 and fall of 1996, eighth-grade students' scores on the MEA increased from 255 to 305 in reading; from 185 to 245 in writing; from 290 to 360 in mathematics; from 225 to 245 in science; from 225 to 255 in social studies; from 250 to 255 in arts and humanities; and from 195 to 265 in health. Eighth-grade scores from the fall of 1995 showed King students surpassing state averages in all areas of the test except writing.

## Research-based Reform Strategies

King was organized to reflect the characteristics of successful middle schools, including a clearly defined mission, effective leadership, student-centered teachers, and opportunities for all students to explore their personal interests and become reflective learners. The staff decided that teachers would remain with the same group of students for two consecutive years to foster a climate of trust and to increase the ties among students within classes and among students and their teachers. This also encourages teacher accountability for students and strengthens parent and teacher communication.

Program organizers also eliminated pull-out assistance when King became a schoolwide program. Services for migrant students with limited English skills, and others who require additional academic assistance, take place in regular classrooms, although specialized assistance is available in small study groups, after school programs, and in a student learning center staffed with diagnostic teaching specialists and counselors.

The rigorous, standards-based curriculum at King reflects the 10 design principles of the ELOB model: (1) the primacy of self-discovery; (2) the possession of wonderful ideas; (3) student responsibility for learning; (4) intimacy and caring; (5) success and failure; (6) collaboration and competition; (7) diversity and inclusion; (8) the natural world; (9) reflection and solitude; and (10) service and compassion. The model fosters collaboration among the teaching staff in house teams that use three common planning periods per week to plan expeditions and regular classroom instruction.

***Under the Expeditionary Learning/ Outward Bound model (ELOB), student learning is organized around rigorous interdisciplinary projects.***

***Students' culminating projects are evaluated against high standards, are set within the school, and are displayed for public review.***

Because there are no set class periods or bells at King, teachers have the flexibility to schedule the school day according to the tasks on which their student groups are working.

In-depth, interdisciplinary learning expeditions group students heterogeneously to accommodate their interests and learning styles. Flexible scheduling encourages students to delve deeply into the curriculum and explore questions that relate to their lives. The ELOB model uses the same variety of assessment tools across classrooms to evaluate students' learning: portfolios, critique sessions, self-evaluation, performance tasks, benchmark assessments, and evaluation conferences. Using a two-tiered portfolio system, students keep both a "working" portfolio of all drafts and works-in-progress and a "finished" portfolio of final products. At the end of each expedition, students must create final "demonstrations," each completed to high-quality standards that are explicitly set by teachers and students.

***The emphasis on teamwork and peer collaboration means new students become part of a peer group soon after they enroll in the school and ensures that all students' contributions are valued.***

Students have access to numerous enrichment classes, including computer and music classes in grade six, art and a reading/writing workshop in grade seven, and design/technology and family/consumer science in grade eight. Based on the national Outward Bound program, the physical education program at the school features a ropes course and other activities to promote teamwork.

King's ESL population has grown dramatically since the early 1990s. In school year 1997-98, 22 percent of students required ESL services, compared with 6 percent in 1992. Four ESL teachers work with ESL students in both a beginners' and a transitional program. The beginners' program targets students who have little or no knowledge of English—many also have no formal education experience—and works with them on basic language skills. ESL students in the transitional program are mainstreamed into regular classrooms gradually, based on their progress. "When we redesigned the school, we chose a model that works for all kids," explained McCarthy. For the growing ESL populations that also includes newcomers to the United States, interdisciplinary expeditionary learning is particularly successful. Collaborative project work personalizes instruction and motivates students to take greater responsibility for their own learning. The emphasis on teamwork and peer collaboration means new students become part of a peer group soon after they enroll in the school and ensures that all students' contributions are valued.

## The Professional Learning Community

King's professional learning community includes 55 teachers, 11 educational technology specialists, four guidance counselors, and two administrators. Professional development revolves around the middle school philosophy, the ELOB model, and principles that promote ongoing reflection and revision. According to McCarthy, ELOB has inspired teachers to understand professional development as an integrated philosophy rather than as a series of fragmented workshops. When King became an Expeditionary Learning Center in 1993, a NAS designer worked with staff to integrate the ELOB model with other features of the middle school program. Now, a faculty member serves as a teaching strategist and offers most of the on-site training. The teaching strategist provides on-the-job mentoring, seeks out professional development opportunities, and identifies and obtains instructional materials for teachers.

There are many staff development opportunities throughout the year that model ELOB design principles. Each one invites educators to become learners by immersing them in "summits" that focus on academic content pertaining to the middle school curriculum and assessment. Teachers participate in one-day community explorations where they work with colleagues in small groups to identify, review, and compile potential field sites and resources for future learning expeditions. They have the option to attend five-day institutes on curriculum-writing or on organizing and sequencing learning expeditions to make their practices consistent with state and local standards. During the school year, the faculty conducts topic-oriented staff meetings and midweek workshops. The workshops emphasize best practices for young adolescents and resemble on-site professional courses. The school's teachers also mentor preservice teachers from the University of Southern Maine's new teacher internship programs. They introduce future teachers to the ELOB model and supervise and evaluate these teachers-in-training during a nine-week interval at King.

**ELOB inspires teachers to understand professional development as an integrated philosophy rather than as a series of fragmented workshops. These design principles, shared by the faculty, are the foundation of all learning and teaching at King Middle School:**

- Self-discovery
- Wonderful ideas
- Student responsibility for learning
- Intimacy and caring
- Success and failure
- Collaboration and competition
- Diversity and inclusion
- The natural world
- Reflection and solitude
- Service and compassion

## Parent and Community Partnerships

ELOB learning expeditions rely on the expertise and support of both parents and community volunteers. King recruits volunteers to supervise students and assist with the logistics involved in implementing off-campus expeditions. A Portland law firm has been a particularly supportive partner to King, contributing to the off-site learning expeditions by mentoring at-risk students and promoting the school's arts program. The lobby of the law firm showcases students' artwork and the firm has donated lights to the school so that students' work can be displayed well in the school hallways. To keep parents and community members informed of learning activities and student performances, King publishes and disseminates newsletters and has produced two videos that highlight students' projects.

Parent, community, and teacher volunteers supervise "After School at King," a program for students who request additional academic assistance or who have questions about their homework. In addition, King provides four rooms that are open for students, parents, and community members to collaborate on completing projects before, during, or after school. According to McCarthy, the idea for the project rooms originated with the students themselves. "The rooms are a way to level the playing field for many of our students who live in small quarters and don't have access to materials such as poster board and art supplies," he said.

King makes a special effort to reach migrant parents through home visits in the fall and an annual multicultural/migrant party in May, which attract 75 to 80 percent of migrant families. The staff conducts regular conferences with parents to keep them informed about expectations and students' progress. The Parent Teacher Organization has also become increasingly popular since King became an Expeditionary Learning Center, and its members endowed a significant amount of money toward technology and the school's drama program to increase expeditionary instructional opportunities.

***Parent, community, and teacher volunteers supervise "After School at King," a program for students who request additional academic assistance or who have questions about their homework.***

## Sustaining Change

King significantly changed its organization and philosophy when it became a Expeditionary Learning Center. To maintain effectiveness, the ELOB model requires a considerable commitment of time and energy from the King staff who continue to infuse the latest research-based instructional strategies into the academic program. A positive aspect of the change involves the public display of student work at King's annual "Demonstration Day," a schoolwide event that celebrates student learning and success and enjoys communitywide participation. These demonstrations, coupled with the bonds forged between teachers and students as they prepare for the day's events, have changed the school's culture and motivated both staff and students. "Success breeds success," McCarthy observed, "when teachers and the outside community see that our students can produce high-quality work, they want to stay committed."

# Achieving a World-Class Standard in a Culturally Diverse Community

## Gompers Secondary School Center for Science, Mathematics, and Computer Technology Magnet

**San Diego City Schools · San Diego, California**

### OVERVIEW

When Gompers Secondary School Center for Science, Mathematics, and Computer Technology Magnet began its schoolwide program in 1995, it unified its seventh- through twelfth-grade program components into a single plan with the same ambitious vision for all students. "Our vision is to educate all of our students with a challenging world-class curriculum in a safe, culturally diverse setting," stated Gompers Principal Marie Thornton. "To do this, we have created a program that meets every student's needs."

Gompers' academic program, a citywide magnet offering science, mathematics, and computer technology, is consistent with the demanding academic standards and other reforms mandated by the San Diego City Schools. Students participate in individually tailored academic programs, which are coordinated by one of five counselors. The same standards—with the appropriate modifications—apply for students with disabilities and for students who speak limited English. Honors courses and advanced placement classes are available to all students who meet the academic requirements.

The school's budget combines general state and local funds with resources from four ESEA programs—Title I, Eisenhower Professional Development, Safe and Drug-Free Schools, and Innovative Education Program Strategies—as well as from the Perkins Program, the National Science Foundation's Urban Systemic Initiative, a grant from the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, Gifted and Talented Education (GATE), and Healthy Start.

***Gompers serves a multicultural, districtwide population of students, half of whom are from homes with a primary language other than English.***

**Grade Levels**
7–12

**Number of Students (1997–98)**
1,586

**Schoolwide Since**
1992–93

**Racial/Ethnic Composition**
36% Hispanic
35% African American
15% Indo-Chinese
10% White
3% Other

***To graduate from high school, students complete 44 credits, meet a citizenship standard, participate in community service, achieve a minimum 2.0 grade point average, and complete satisfactorily a comprehensive senior portfolio and exhibitions scored by school and community evaluators.***

## Vision, Leadership, and Decision Making

Gompers serves students from 19 racial and ethnic groups, among them Hispanic, African American, Laotian, white, Somali, Japanese, and Chinese. Communitywide commitment transformed Gompers from a fragmented, low-achieving school to a cohesive schoolwide family of high-achievers, integrating its magnet program with a schoolwide philosophy.

Shared decisionmaking at Gompers occurs through several oversight structures. Department chairs and members of the classified staff head key committees, such as the Bilingual Advisory Committee and School Site Council. Proposals for new programs or activities move through committees, where members—including parents—debate ideas and flesh out concepts before sending the proposals to the faculty or Governance Team. The 10-member Governance Team finalizes committee decisions, which are then sent to either the principal's Administrative Council, three in-school decision-making bodies, or parents for approval. According to Dr. Thornton, "Most of the time we use consensus, but when we're not quite sure if we have consensus we take a vote—sometimes one that includes a secret ballot."

## Student Performance Results

Gompers requires students to meet standards that exceed those of the district. It insists that students complete the district's 44-credit course requirements and its good citizenship standard, but then adds that students must earn a minimum 2.0 grade point average. Students must have a 2.5 grade point average and satisfactory citizenship to represent the school in off-campus activities. There is "zero tolerance" of truancies and uncleared absences. In addition to reviewing test scores, counselors regularly monitor each student's progress in content areas. Staff use in-class assessments and other performance data to continually align curricula with expected student performance results. The annual School Accountability Report Card informs Gompers staff and parents about students' progress on district and school goals.

Each year, the district and the school administer several measures of performance. The abbreviated Stanford Achievement Test (SAT) documents academic progress in basic reading, mathematics, language, and spelling. Students in Spanish bilingual classes take the *Aprenda*, Stanford's Spanish-language achievement test that parallels the SAT. The district also reports twelfth-grade students' results on the Scholastic Assessment Test. Other performance indicators include retention, dropout, and suspension rates, and the percent of students who meet university entrance requirements.

Gompers' 1996 and 1997 assessment results show steady progress in all subject areas and across all grades. Seventh-graders score well below nationally standardized norms when they enter Gompers; but, by the time they reach high school, more than half of its students will achieve at the national mean in reading, language arts, and mathematics. In 1996, 95 percent of graduating seniors pursued postsecondary education, with 55 percent enrolling in four-year colleges and 40 percent enrolling in two-year colleges. In 1997, those statistics were 51 percent and 45, respectively, with 96 percent of seniors pursuing postsecondary education. Graduates attend the most selective colleges, universities, and military academies in the nation, including Cornell, Stanford, Syracuse, Spelman, University of Chicago, and Fisk. In 1997, Gompers selected eight top students as valedictorians, and that year's graduating class received more than $400,000 in scholarships and grants.

***In 1997, 96% of graduating seniors pursued postsecondary educational opportunities; 51% of these students enrolled in four-year colleges.***

## Research-based Reform Strategies

Because many students who enter Gompers' seventh grade read at low levels, the staff initiated a schoolwide focus on literacy. According to Dr. Thornton, one of Gompers' most effective strategies for closing the reading achievement gap has been daily, sustained silent reading, which occurs from 8:20 am to 8:40 am. "The campus is quiet. Everyone is reading. By encouraging students to read materials of interest and at their independent reading level, they get to the point where they enjoy reading. Once students enjoy it, success builds upon success," she said.

***From 8:20AM to 8:40AM the campus is quiet; everyone is reading.***

Gompers instituted an array of strategies to close the academic achievement gap, bolster students' confidence, and prepare them for a rigorous

*Seventh- and eighth-grade students receive intensive preparation for a demanding high school curriculum.*

*There is "zero tolerance" for truancy or uncleared absences.*

high school program. Entering seventh-graders begin their academic career at Gompers at a six-week camp. There they take mini-courses in English, science, mathematics, social studies, and computer applications, and learn about the school's expectations for homework, note taking, and keeping up with daily assignments. Enrollment is voluntary, but almost half the entering class attend the minicourses.

Students with weak literacy or numeracy skills enroll in double sessions of English or mathematics during their middle school years. These classes are taught by teachers specially trained to teach students the prerequisite skills they need to excel in the seventh- and eighth-grade English and mathematics programs. A highly skilled seventh-grade academic team prepares students for the school's high standards through a curriculum that integrates science, computers, social studies, mathematics, and English. Teachers use problem solving, critical thinking, and extended assignments and exhibitions to advance students' learning. Each classroom has access to the World Wide Web for research. Gompers is one of seven schools nationally that participates in NASA's KidSat. This program connects Gompers seventh-graders through an Internet hookup to the Student Mission Center, where they can meet astronauts and conduct online experiments with them.

Nine special education teachers, three of whom are resource specialists, monitor the progress of students with disabilities as specified in their IEPs. These specialists collaborate with general education teachers. Entering students who do not speak English proficiently may take bilingual academic classes to keep up with content requirements while also developing the English-language skills needed to succeed in higher grades.

*All Gompers' high school students take four years of English, four years of mathematics, two years of a foreign language, three years of social sciences, and four years of laboratory science.*

Gompers high school students must take four years of English, four years of mathematics, two years of a foreign language, three years of social sciences, and four years of laboratory science. Up-to-date equipment and resources—including a "sun station" that powers an eight-inch telescope in the school's outdoor lab, a state-of-the-art computer network with 64 terminals, and a laser/holography apparatus—support advanced science, mathematics, and computer courses. Technology courses introduce students to robotics, electronics, computer graphics, desktop publishing, and computer-aided drafting and architecture; these courses also enhance school-to-work transitions. Students can combine computer applications courses with their business interests, and learn the language of computer data structures in courses on digital electronics. "The thing I try to do is

have the students with the greatest needs take as many challenging classes as they can." Dr. Thornton explained. Advanced mathematics, science, and social studies courses taught by faculty from nearby universities develop students' skills in research, experimentation, and use of technical equipment. The high school offers seven foreign languages. Four of the languages are introduced in an exploratory seventh-grade language course that teaches six weeks each of French, German, Japanese, and Russian language art and culture to help students decide which language they would like to continue studying in high school.

*In-school programs and clubs reinforce the expectations to achieve and they provide students with a safety net for ensuring success.*

A motivational program, Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), lays the groundwork for students to meet the school's high expectations. An honor roll system recognizes students at all ranges of the academic continuum. The highest recognition, the Principal's Honor Roll, requires a minimum 4.0 grade point average; for students who achieve between the 2.0 and 2.9 grade point levels, the "It's O.K. To Be Smart" Honor Roll confers status if students have shown a willingness to challenge themselves. Satisfactory citizenship is a prerequisite for all honor roll students.

Programs and clubs reinforce the school's expectations for achievement and provide a safety net for students. A mathematics, engineering, and science achievement program—funded by the National Science Foundation, the state of California, and private donations—encourages nonwhite students to study for careers in science and mathematics. The faculty collaborates with mathematics and science scholars at San Diego State University to raise students' awareness of study options in the hard sciences and to create opportunities for high school students to participate in mathematics, science, and computer activities, experiments, and performance demonstrations. Other faculty offer as many as 35 clubs and programs that appeal to students' interests, including academics, athletics, service, journalism, theater, student government, and technology. High school students interested in school-to-work opportunities may enroll in computer application and business courses that help prepare them for the world of work.

*Every senior takes either the ACT or the SAT in preparation for postsecondary education.*



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***All of Gompers' professional staff are credentialed in their primary teaching fields; beginning teachers receive help from experienced mentors; parents participate with the faculty in staff development exercises.***

## Professional Learning Community

Professional development is continuous for all faculty, administrative staff, and others affiliated with the school. Teachers present on-site workshops for their colleagues and regularly share new strategies, techniques, and effective problem-based instruction with professionals from other schools. Beginning teachers in the New Teacher Induction Program visit classrooms to observe other teachers and attend professional growth classes. Each month, mentor teachers observe new teachers and advise them on strengthening their use of curricula, instructional methods, and classroom management techniques. All of Gompers' professional staff are credentialed in their primary teaching fields.

The staff participates annually in at least eight days of professional development that includes workshops on content and performance standards, conflict resolution, and curriculum strategies. Continuing mentoring and collaboration give teachers the opportunity to implement their developing strategies in the classroom. Grant monies from the state legislature help send staff to regional and national conferences. Teaching assistants also receive periodic training in the methods used in classrooms by teachers. Part of the schoolwide budget is set aside to encourage parents to participate in conferences, professional development activities, and staff meetings. "We try to run an open house where parents are welcome to participate in anything going on campus," said Dr. Thornton.

## Parent and Community Partnerships

Gompers embraces the whole community in its educational effort. At the beginning of the school year, teachers visit the homes, workplaces, and religious institutions of their students and families. A letter to parents makes clear the important role that parents play in students' academic success. A supplement to the San Diego student handbook welcomes families and students, tells parents about homework requirements, lists the materials students must have on hand every day, and describes the

dress code. It also discusses parents' responsibilities in monitoring their children's progress toward the school's ambitious academic curriculum.

"Our diversity is our strength," Dr. Thornton asserts proudly. Through an active human and race relations program, students and teachers participate in activities and seminars that develop sensitivity toward the school's many cultures and traditions. In collaboration with various national organizations and the district's integration services office, 75 students, 15 teachers, and various other staff members spent four days at Camp Minitown in the Palamar Mountains. The program fosters interpersonal relationships by teaching students to understand diversity and commonality across cultures, to challenge the stereotypes they hold, and, in doing so, to develop a respect for other cultures and ethnic groups. A teacher and a classroom aide, who completed the training, teach a course on race and human relations at Gompers.

Parent committees and an active community advisory council are essential components of the school's decision-making structure. Professionals from San Diego State University, the University of California at San Diego, and the public library advise and contribute to planning and curriculum development. Individuals from these groups also consult on financial and organizational matters and arrange private tutoring, mentors, tours, workshops, paid summer laboratory internships, and other educational opportunities for students. In addition, one business partner provides $2,000 for students to participate in competitions, another business partner funds the school's outdoor science lab, and a local science museum provides opportunities for students to preview exhibits.

A district-sponsored parent center located on Gompers' campus provides parenting classes, ESL classes, GED preparation, and cultural awareness for self-sufficiency classes. The center attracts more than 500 parents annually. Gompers' own parent center welcomes more than 1,800 parents annually to participate in various Gompers programs, including parent days at the school, school spirit activities, and senior class parent meetings. In October 1997, more than 300 members of the Gompers community attended the grand opening of the Lincoln/Gompers Cluster Family Service Center and health fair. Staffed by a psychologist and social workers from a coalition of community-based agencies, the center gives students and their families on-campus access to health services, counseling, and early childhood programs. A Healthy Start planning grant from the California legislature promises to expand health services for students and families.

***Diversity is Gompers' strength. To understand that diversity, teachers visit the homes, workplaces, and religious institutions of their students and families at the beginning of the school year.***

## Sustaining Change

Encouraging teachers' ideas and initiatives is one of Gompers' primary strategies for ensuring that teachers are full partners in decisionmaking. When implementing the school's new ideas and programs, Dr. Thornton delegates as much responsibility as possible to staff leaders. "So much evolves from our teachers that [it is not difficult] to keep them going," said Dr. Thornton. Major teacher-led initiatives include the AVID program, KidSat, and the Wildcat Cubs-MESH (Mathematics, English, Science, History) program.

***Encouraging teachers' ideas and initiatives ensures that Gompers' teachers are full partners in decisionmaking.***

Like many urban schools, Gompers is located in a neighborhood troubled with gang problems, substance abuse, low incomes, and crime. Still, according to the school's annual progress report, 92 percent of Gompers' parents say they feel safe sending their children to Gompers. One reason, Dr. Thornton observed, is that faculty have "made curriculum [improvements], increased expectations of students, staff, parents, and community and increased the demands on our human and financial resources. Throughout this [process]...the staff continues to work tirelessly in helping our students excel and achieve."

*"A passion for excellence means thinking big and starting small: excellence happens when high purpose and intense pragmatism meet…*

*[But] a passion for excellence also carries a price, and we state it simply: the adventure of excellence is not for the faint of heart."*

Tom Peters and Nancy Austin (1985).
*A Passion for Excellence: The Leadership Difference* (p. 414).
New York: Random House.

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# Addresses for Profiled Schools

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**The schools featured in this Idea Book welcome questions about their programs.**

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**Lincoln WorldLab Magnet Elementary School**
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*U.S. Government Printing Office: 1999 — 719-095/93695



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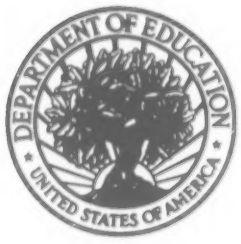


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